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Frances Musgrave

A TALE OF THE TIMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF A GOSSIP'S STORY.

DEDICATED, BY PERMISSION, TO MRS. CARTER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

Nor ſhall the pile of hope God's mercy rear'd,
By vain philoſophy be e'er deſtroy'd:
Eternity, by all or wiſh'd or fear'd,
Shall be by all or ſuffer'd or enjoy'd.
MASON's *Elegy on the Death of Lady Coventry.*

Dublin:

PRINTED BY WILLIAM PORTER, GRAFTON-STREET.

1799.

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A

TALE

OF THE

TIMES.

CHAP. I.

Then gay ideas crowd the vacant brain,
While peers and dukes, and all their ſweeping train,
And garters, ſtars, and coronets appear,
And in ſoft ſounds "Your Grace" ſalutes the ear.
POPE.

FITZOSBORNE's thoughts were now ſo engroſſed by his intended attack on the principles and honour of lady Monteith, that he felt as little intereſted about the event of his engagements with lady Arabella as if the marriage ceremony had really taken place. He was rouſed from this inſenſibility by the noble viſcount his brother, who, having procured a copy of the redoubtable ſettlement, which I have before mentioned, ſwore upon his honour (his lordſhip, though very fond of this oath, was never known to be forſworn) that the terms were too hard for any man above a ſhoe-black to abide by. "I would have you "by all means, Ned," ſaid he, "make a better "bargain for yourſelf. The girl is immenſely "fond of you, that is evident; and a fellow with

"a tenth part of your addreſs would make the "pretty driveller accede to any thing. Can't "you give her a little ſentiment upon the occa- "ſion, and tell her, that by reſerving all her for- "tune in her own power, it will be abſolutely "impoſſible for her ever to enjoy the ſublime "gratification of receiving obligations from the "perſon ſhe loves? Can't you flouriſh too upon "the proviſion in caſe of ſeparation and divorce, "and declare that the frigorific idea petrifies "your whole frame? Be maſter of her fortune, "however, at all events; for let me tell you, "my dear lad, a wife's affections in this age are "but a transferable commodity of little perma- "nent value, I aſſure you."

Edward felt too well convinced of his influ- ence to doubt the poſſibility of his acquiring the glittering prize upon his own terms; and he ſketched in his mind the only conditions upon which he would conſent to give the lady the ho- nour of his name. Theſe conditions were re- markable for nothing but their being a direct contradiction to lady Madelina's plan. But on his firſt converſation with lady Arabella upon the ſubject he diſcovered, that he had greatly miſ- taken her character when he attributed to it any degree of pliability in pecuniary matters. She, indeed, loved to ſquander with thoughtleſs pro- fuſion; but that very love of ſquandering ſug- geſted the propriety of retaining the power of doing ſo; and the lovers parted with great mu- tual diſſatisfaction: Edward convinced that his merits would confer honour upon any lady on whom he beſtowed his hand, and lady Arabella perſuaded that a younger brother has no right to expect a higher office than to be his wife's ſtew- ard, if he be ſo lucky as to engage the good opi- nion of a woman of fortune. Both ſeemed in-

clined

clined to bring their matrimonial pretenſions to a freſh market. He thought that his perſon might attract ſome fair one equally rich and leſs mercenary; and ſhe knew, that when people calculate upon good matches, there is always as great a difference between preſent poſſeſſion and reverſionary expectation, as there is between the comparative ſplendor of a baronial and a ducal coronet. The gentleman pondered upon the propriety of diſcontinuing his addreſſes; but the lady haſtened his deliberations by informing him, that if his viſits at Portland-place were upon her account, ſhe begged ſhe might not in future interrupt his important avocations; and thus Mr. Fitzoſborne was ſuddenly reduced to the ſituation of a *rejected* ſwain, a condition which the verſatility of his talents knew how to improve.

Lady Arabella's frivolity, ſelfiſhneſs, and avowed expectation of making ſuperior conqueſts, did not diſcredit the tale which Fitzoſborne told of his diſmiſſion. The blunt integrity of lord Monteith's character took fire at his ſiſter's evident dereliction of the principles of honour, conſtancy, and female delicacy; and the reluctance with which the ſpecious Edward appeared to diſcover her caprice irritated his ardent temper ſtill more. He charged her with baſe infidelity and groſs indecorum; and ſhe evaded the charge by urging, that ſhe was a free independant being, and accountable to no one for her actions, which were the reſult of her opinions; and no one had any right to ſcrutinize the opinions of others. The earl raved againſt this heterodox doctrine, becauſe it militated againſt his wiſh of ſupremacy, without diſcovering that there was a degree of ingratitude in the application of theſe principles againſt the intereſt of the maſter from whom ſhe had acquired them; and her ladyſhip reſolved.

reſolved never to miſlead her huſband by furniſhing a previous inſtance of her ſubmiſſion to her brother's authority. She removed on the very evening of the diſpute to the houſe of lord viſcount Fitzoſborne.

In order to explain the reaſon of her chooſing that aſylum, I muſt unriddle a little Machiavelian policy. The ſituation of the noble houſe of Fitzoſborne was become ſo very precarious in point of credit, that the repreſentative of its honours, like Shakeſpeare's Percy, had long "caſt "many a northern look to ſee the Frazer bring "up his powers." The illuſtrious viſcount indeed could not give himſelf a legal title to that ſpacious inheritance which now centered in lady Arabella; but his fraternal wiſh of transferring it to his own family was not quite diſintereſted. Edward had ever appeared too abſtracted, too generous, and too ſuperior to low mercenary views, to deny a brother the loan of a few thouſands, and his indifference to money was in the viſcount's opinion the cauſe of his preſent diſappointment; for had his whole heart been engroſſed by the deſire of advancing his fortune, the pretty bird might have beat her gay plumage in uſeleſs vexation, at finding herſelf ſurrounded by too many toils ever to hope for recovered liberty.

In oppoſition to thoſe ſaturnine cenſors who affirm that a genteel pair never think or act in concert, I have to relate a ſcheme in which the viſcount and his lady cordially co-operated, and which, though it might not terminate in an invocation of Venus's antique doves, promiſed to produce a modern pigeon. The farce commenced with a viſit from the viſcounteſs to her dear friend; during which ſhe heard with mingled ſurpriſe and grief that Mr. Fitzoſborne's expec-

tations

tations were ſo very illiberal, and his temper ſo very uncomplying, that the connection was diſſolved. She commended the laudable ſpirit which dictated lady Arabella's reſolution of ſooner breaking her heart than ſubmitting to unjuſtifiable demands; but when ſhe added, that, by thus acting with proper regard to female dignity, ſhe had excited the reſentment of her brother, the indignation of her ſympathizing friend exceeded all bounds. With bitter ſarcaſms on the indelicacy of lord Monteith's interference, ſhe intreated her to remove directly to lord Fitzoſborne's, and aſſured her, that offended beauty would find a protector in the viſcount; who would either compel Edward to make proper conceſſions, or diſown him for a brother. There was ſomething truly *Roman* in this ſentiment. It was expreſſed with becoming dignity; and the viſcounteſs, ſtill farther to enforce it, added, "You will get a "little more into the world, my dear, from which, "it is certain, you have lately been too much "ſecluded. We have frequently little private "parties, at which you cannot object to taking a "card, for nobody will know any thing about it, "ſo that there cannot be any indecorum. I pro-"teſt, I think you grow more bewitching every "hour. Your mourning becomes you ſo ex-"quiſitely, that in pity to the world I ought to "propoſe keeping you ſhut up, that other belles "may have a little chance; but I own I am ma-"licious enough to wiſh to give a little fillip to "Edward's fears. Nothing is ſo animating as a "ſtrong fit of jealouſy, and I know that to make "freſh conqueſts you need only appear." So friendſhip urged; and its arguments were concluſive.

The parties might now be ſaid to be fairly drawn up in battle array; for, not to yield to the

Fitzoſbornes in hoſpitality, lord Monteith had inſiſted that Edward ſhould become his gueſt; and, though their taſtes and diſpoſitions were by no means in uniſon, he fancied himſelf highly gratified with the companion he had ſelected; and he was much too warm an advocate for what he eſteemed an injured character to permit the counteſs to continue neuter. Fitzoſborne's affected dejection ſoon intereſted her feeling heart; and, though ſhe could ſcarcely conſider the loſs of an Arabella to be a misfortune, ſhe felt that great allowance ſhould be made for the force of diſappointment upon a mind ſo ſtrongly ſuſceptible. Still incredulous as to the reality of his attachment, ſhe was inclined to believe, that after he had acceded to the propoſals of his friends, a ſenſe of honour and the force of habit had produced in his refined diſpoſition a recurrence of the ſame images, which might be almoſt ſuppoſed equivalent to preference. The void which female caprice had left in his imagination muſt be at preſent painful, and, though an enlightened underſtanding would ſoon occupy the chaſm with a more brilliant ſet of ideas, delicate ſenſibility might be allowed to ſtart at the illiberal ridicule which a cenſorious world is ever ready to beſtow on a jilted ſwain or a forſaken damſel. Beſide, without being mercenary, might not a prudent man regret the loſs of a ſplendid eſtabliſhment? To ſoften that regret ſhe exerted all the brilliant powers of her mind, and all the faſcinating graces of her numerous accompliſhments. Charmed out of his pretended melancholy, Fitzoſborne ſeemed to beſtow a liſtleſs attention, varying the contour of his expreſſions as the ſtyle of her attractions required: Sometimes terminating his ſilent adulation by exclaiming,

ing, "Happy Monteith!" At another expatiating in praiſe of friendſhip; or, if he aimed at making the moſt forcible impreſſion, he only interrupted the vivacity of her tones by the frequency of his ſighs. But in either inſtance he was equally careful that lord Monteith ſhould hear both the exclamations and the ſighs.

Diſappointed by perceiving that his dejection did not yield to time, and more than ever convinced that love could not have made ſuch an incurable wound, the counteſs began to ſuſpect that this diſorder was conſtitutional, and ſhe propoſed his applying to ſociety and change of ſcene, the uſual recipe for a melancholic humour. His conſtant rejection of invitations induced her to pique his pride. "Do you know," ſaid ſhe, "that lady Arabella flouriſhes in the firſt circles, "and is become ſo very irreſiſtible, that not only "wits and beaus write madrigals to her, but a "certain young duke of our acquaintance is "thought to be ſeriouſly entangled? They are "to be at the opera together to-night in his "grace's box. Now I intend to go, and take "you for my *ciciſbeo*. What ſay you to my "ſcheme? It will be generous to ſhew the "young adventurer how Armida metamorphoſes "her knights before he is irrecoverably enchant-"ed."

"I am very willing to exhibit my woe-begone "face, if the publication of it will afford you any "amuſement," returned Fitzoſborne. "The "duke and I ſhall not exchange any angry "glances, and I honour lady Arabella's ſincerity "too much to feel any reſentment at her conduct. "She has only exerciſed the indubitable right of "every human being. Her heart has changed "its poſſeſſor, and ſhe has obeyed its dictates."

" Does not your candour grant rather too " great a latitude here?" inquired the counteſs.

" Conſidering the prejudices of the times, I " certainly do. But is there not a great degree " of cruelty in requiring conſtancy from thoſe " minds that have not ſufficient fortitude to be " really immutable? And after all, as we can " only aſſume the appearance of it, is it not alſo " unjuſt, and wicked too, as we create a neceſ- " ſity for hypocriſy? To diſeaſes in different " conſtitutions we preſcribe different remedies; " but the diſorders of the mind muſt be all cured " by one univerſal panacea. Surely it is only " the tyranny of cuſtom that prevents us from " adapting our moral code to every character, " inſtead of ſtretching diſſimilar minds on the " gigantic iron couch deſigned for a Procruſ- " tes."

Lady Monteith felt ſtartled. She recollected that where much was given much would be required; yet this text related to diſſimilar powers of doing good, and could not poſſibly be urged in extenuation of any vicious action. But Fitz-oſborne interrupted her muſings by aſſuming a gayer air than he had lately exhibited. " I ſee," ſaid he, " I ſhall have ſome difficulty to recon- " cile you to *all* my opinions; But, no matter; " when I legiſlate for the world, don't flatter " yourſelf, that I ſhall propoſe a lax ſyſtem to " you. I know how to eſtimate your mental " ability, and *your* code ſhall be rigorous and " coercive."

" Dare you repeat this ſpeech to-night at the " opera in the hearing of lady Arabella?" ſaid the counteſs.

" There requires no courage to repeat an un- " diſputed truth in the hearing of the whole " world."

"world." Lady Monteith forgot her disapprobation of the novelty, singularity, and laxity of Fitzosborne's opinions; and as she drove to form her party for the evening, she only remembered his happy talent at a compliment.

CHAP. II.

It is Jealousy's peculiar nature
To swell small things to great; nay out of nothing
To conjure much.

YOUNG.

THE polite world were so engrossed by engagements, that lady Monteith found it impossible to form a party to her satisfaction. Exclusive of the pale votaries, who sacrifice peace, health, fortune, and honour at the shrine of Pharo, several were engaged to the Quizzes, and more to the Cabinet of Monkies, which was just opened. The fair countess could scarcely get any body into her party but those who were left out of all others: and they who refused her secretly laughed at the rusticity of supposing any body, who lived in the world, could defer till two o'clock the important business of fixing the evening occupation. She was forced to be contented with an antiquated belle of the last age, and a would-be fine lady of the present, to whom she was lucky enough to add a beau, sir Hargrave Nappy, a gentleman, who though known by every body to be incurably deaf, had long laboured under the tantalising desire of wishing to be thought a connoisseur in music. With this design he constantly attended the opera,

were

where his unvarying countenance and fixed posture procured him the appellation of the pillar of melody.

Surrounded by the group I have described, and escorted by the gallant Edward Fitzosborne, lady Monteith entered a side-box opposite to that which was occupied by lady Arabella's party. Had Geraldine intended to have selected foils for her own person, the females in her train were most happily gifted by nature for that purpose; and in point of celebrity they were just enough known to make it difficult for any lady to decline being their companion. Repeated mortifications had taught them the arcana of high life; and the protection of a countess was sufficiently flattering to confine them to that humble part which they supposed her ladyship intended they should sustain. Claiming sir Hargrave for their share of the beaus, they invited him to seat himself between them, and they addressed all their observations to him, without once turning their heads to listen to the conversation which passed behind them. But sir Hargrave was so absorbed in opera ecstacies, that unless his eye happened to inform him that he was peculiarly addressed, all the *smart things* passed utterly unnoticed. Indeed the only honour that they ever received was a half bend, after which the amateur resumed his former erect position, and with one hand in his bosom, and the other (on which was a fine antique) beating time on the front of the box, he repeated, like Shakespeare's Lorenzo, "Mark "the music."

It is a very great pity that these unfortunate *smart things* should be wholly lost. The prescient muse at least must be supposed to have heard them; but I feel so anxious to return to the

the reſt of the party, that I muſt defer the recapitulation of them to ſome other opportunity, promiſing, if poſſible, either to interweave them with the hiſtory of my travels, or, if I have no other means of introduction, to give them to the world in the form of "More laſt words of Mrs. Prudentia."

The blooming Geraldine never appeared ſo enchanting. She perceived, with a degree of pleaſure, in which ſhe did not ſuſpect any criminality, that the adventures of her box proved infinitely more intereſting to lady Arabella, than the devoirs of the noble duke whom ſhe wiſhed to exhibit as her captive. Fitzoſborne was in excellent ſpirits. The counteſs enjoyed the circumſtance. She thought he had been extremely ill uſed, and ſhe applauded the ſpirit which could return inſult with contempt. His attentions to herſelf, conſidered in this point of view, gave her ſincere ſatisfaction. She returned them. Her natural vivacity, combining with accidental circumſtances, hurried her into a degree of mirth, which, to thoſe who were unacquainted with its motives, appeared to border upon coquetry, more than the innocence of her heart and the rectitude of her principles would have permitted.

But while the lamb, baſking in the blaze of noon, bounds over the flowery hillock, the wolf watches its haunts and meditates its deſtruction. To exemplify my paſtoral ſimile: Fitzoſborne ſaw with diabolical exultation, that Geraldine's behaviour had attracted general attention. He doubted not but calumny would be ready to frame ſome malignant whiſper, and he underſtood the maxim which teaches that "virtue rarely ſurvives the loſs of reputation." Though he conceived that the powers of his own invention were fully

equal

equal to overthrow any defence which lady Monteith might make, he did not diſdain adventitious aid. His watchful eye, though ſeemingly only fixed on the lovely form which was ſeated by him, had diſcovered lord Monteith in the pit. He perceived too that he was attentive to his lady's behaviour, and he fancied he read diſpleaſure in his countenance. "Can this thoughtleſs animal," ſaid Fitzoſborne to himſelf," "have any thing like jealouſy in his compoſition? He ſeems leſs careleſs than uſual. If ſo, it is indeed above my hopes."

While he ruminated on this idea, the door of the box opened, and a young man of faſhion ſtepped in. He was an intimate friend of lord Monteith's; and, ſeeing the counteſs in what he thought a new point of view, he was deſirous of ſharing the pleaſure which her converſation afforded. This did not increaſe the gaiety of the party. The appearance of a ſtranger cauſed a temporary interruption. Geraldine recollected her thoughts, and her natural delicacy ſeemed to ſhrink from an intruſion which, though ſanctioned by the freedom of our preſent ſyſtem of manners, ſeemed inconſiſtent with ſtrict politeneſs. His ſtyle of addreſs too was bold and familiar, very different from the inſinuating ſenſibility of Fitzoſborne, who, though conſcious of diſtinction, never appeared to preſume upon favour. She determined to mark her approbation of his behaviour by her own conduct, and, inſtead of the confidence and vivacity which marked her deportment previous to the entrance of her new gueſt, ſhe became as cold and circumſcribed in her anſwers as the rules of civility could poſſibly admit.

Lord

Lord Monteith now entered the box; and, as he never concealed any ſentiment, the diſpleaſure he felt was ſtrongly marked in his countenance. He had heard his lady pointed out as uncommonly beautiful by a ſtranger who ſat next him; and though he was very well pleaſed with that plaudit, the ſubſequent obſervations were not ſatisfactory. To the words "Charming creature!" were added "and ſo gay, ſo lively too in her "manners! what a happy man that gentleman "muſt be!" The ſtranger was juſt arrived from the country, and unwittingly ſuppoſed that a married pair would not forfeit their claims to celebrity by appearing at the ſame entertainment in the ſame party. Every exclamation which he uttered in compliment of the affectionate attention of this peerleſs couple increaſed the earl's reſtleſſneſs; and, no longer able to conceal his own right to the charmer who thus faſcinated all eyes, he ſuddenly roſe and joined her. He had ſeen nothing in her manner which cuſtom did not juſtify, and Fitzoſborne was of all others the friend in whom he could moſt confide. Yet, without knowing what to blame, he thought the laws of cuſtom required reviſal.

Geraldine had not that ſpecies of fortitude which ſees diſpleaſure on a huſband's brow without any ſentiment but exultation. She was ignorant of thoſe principles which teach the diſſipated wife who has long renounced the power of pleaſing to exult in the capacity of giving pain. The light heart which had prompted the gay repartee became loaded with ſudden depreſſion, and the frolic ſmile vaniſhed with the unaffected vivacity which had given it birth.

The world had much to ſay on the adventures of this evening. Poor Arabella! every body

was

was very ſorry for her. Lady Monteith had certainly ſpirited away her lover. Her exultation upon the occaſion was rather too marked for a woman of prodigious decorum; and really, if ſhe did continue to flirt it ſo notoriouſly in public, ſhe muſt renounce her pretenſions to ſuch *very* ſtrict propriety, and conſent to be thought no better than other people.

At coming out of the opera Fitzoſborne tapped lord Monteith upon the ſhoulder, and aſked him, how he diſpoſed of himſelf for the evening. "At home, if you have nothing better "to propoſe:" was the anſwer. "There is a "ſpirited ſet juſt gone to Brookes's," continued Fitzoſborne; "ſuppoſe we follow them to ob- "ſerve manners and characters." His lordſhip had no objection.

Early in lord Monteith's life his name was unfortunately familiar to the frequenters of the gaming-table and the heroes of the turf. His attachment to the lovely Geraldine leſſened that dangerous propenſity; and, though ſhe had failed in her endeavours to inſpire a love of elegant pleaſures, indifference for his former purſuits had gradually increaſed to diſguſt: the leſs pernicious ſports of the field, and a boyiſh turn of amuſement, ſucceeding in occupying a mind too volatile to ſeek pleaſure out of its own reſources. But ſince his lordſhip's diſguſt and forbearance aroſe more from the abſence of temptation than from any fixed principle, the ſight of the card-table and the rattle of the dice-box excited paſſions which increaſed the unſubdued emotion that he had felt at the opera.

He propoſed to Fitzoſborne to form a party. Edward pleaded a total want of ſkill; proteſted, that he had a fixed abhorrence of the gaming-table;

table; and declared, that he never visited those scenes, except to study the human character, and to moralize on the fatal effects of the impetuous passion of avarice. His reflections were soon finished that evening, for in a little time he professed himself wearied with the scene, and he proposed to lord Monteith that they should retire to a private room. There too he felt the moments drag heavily, and it was mutually agreed to enliven them by a friendly game at picquet.

The stake first proposed was trifling. Monteith was unsuccessful. He transferred his latent resentment to the cards, which he stamped under his foot; called for a new pack, and insisted upon doubling the sum they played for. The events of the evening put several hundreds into Fitzosborne's pocket; and his success might still have been greater, but neither his friendship nor his honour would (he protested) permit him to urge his good fortune any further. "Your "temper," said he, "is too warm; and I hope "the little vexations of this evening will con- "vince you of the necessity of self-control, or "at least prevent you from trying your chance "with those who might take the ungenerous "advantage of your agitation, which I scorn to "use."

"I value not money," said Monteith angrily; "nor can the cursed cards agitate me. A "truce with your morality, therefore, Edward; "when I want a monitor, it is time enough for "you to invest yourself with that dignity."

"I am not in a resentful humour," returned Fitzosborne smiling. "I shall therefore very "gladly resign my dignity, as you term it. In- "deed, I have been a little unlucky in the exer- "cise of it this evening. Yet if my well-meant "admonitions are but remembered by my

"friends,

" friends, the diſintereſtedneſs of my attachment
" will enable me to ſupport a little tranſient acri-
" mony."

" Where elſe did you play the lecturer?" inquired Monteith, careleſsly.

" Where I ſaw a little impropriety," replied Fitzoſborne, with ſuppreſſed ſignificance.

" And did you ſucceed no better than you
" have done with me?" continued the earl, with increaſing anxiety.

" I don't know. The character I had to deal
" with was more *guarded* than you are."

" What cauſed your reproof?" ſaid his lordſhip, with affected eaſe, and apparently occupied in ſorting the cards into three diviſions.

" I believe nothing but too great nicety of
" my own feelings; for on reviewing the affair
" I cannot ſee any thing eſſentially wrong; and
" I begin to think thoſe rules which impoſe
" ſuperior caution on perſons who are objects
" of public admiration unneceſſarily ſevere."

" The ſentiments of ladies," reſumed Monteith, " are generally more delicate in theſe points
" than thoſe of men. Suppoſe you make Geral-
" dine your caſuiſt in this buſineſs: She will tell
" you if you went too far in your admonitions."

" By no means," ſaid Fitzoſborne, ſnatching the cards. " Come, enough of one ſubject.
" Shall we have another game?"

" No! I am tired; and as I love to have every
" doubtful buſineſs cleared up, we will go home
" to ſupper, and I will mention your uneaſineſs
" to lady Monteith, that you may ſleep with a
" diſburdened conſcience."

Fitzoſborne ſtarted. " How came *you* to diſcover, that the haſty opinion which I injudi-
" ciouſly uttered, really diſpleaſed her? Let me
" conjure you, my lord, by all our friendſhip,
" endea-

" endeavour to reſtore me to her favour, and be
" convinced that I can only have forfeited it
" through inadvertence."

Lord Monteith ſmiled with the conſcious ſuperiority which attends a ſucceſsful feint, and aſſured the alarmed Fitzoſborne, that, if he would candidly acknowledge the nature of his offence, he might depend upon his interpoſition.

" It really," returned Edward, " was nothing
" of conſequence. You have often charged me
" with poſſeſſing a ſtoical ſternneſs, and I con-
" feſs ſome of my notions are auſtere. The
" counteſs was in very lively ſpirits this even-
" ing."

" Was ſhe?" ſaid Monteith, biting his lips.

" I ſaid ſomething to her, I forget what, re-
" ſpecting the eaſe with which Britiſh matrons
" publicly permit the advances of notorious li-
" bertines. I beg your pardon, Monteith, I know
" he is your friend; but I muſt own, I repeated
" this with more energy when ſir Richard Ver-
" non came into the box. You know his noti-
" ons are avowedly licentious."

" It was very friendly of you," exclaimed his lordſhip, with a voice convulſed with paſſion. " Did he talk to lady Monteith in an improper
" ſtyle?"

" By no means. Yet there was ſomewhat
" freer in his addreſs than I ſhould have approv-
" ed had the lady been my wife; and I felt for
" my abſent friend. The blaze of your Geral-
" dine's charms, my lord, is loſt upon me.
" Beauty can never more affect my heart. But
" I too well recollect the emotions it has cauſed
" not to wiſh ſir Richard to avoid lady Monteith,
" at leaſt if he reſpects his own tranquillity."

" And could Geraldine reſent your friendly
" obſervation?" interrupted Monteith.

" She

" She only anſwered, that I was grown ſple-
" netic, for public places ſanctioned theſe intru-
" ſions. I however obſerved, that ſhe did not
" ſpeak to me any more during the whole even-
" ing."

" I deteſt caprice. She ſhall acknowledge
" the friendlineſs of your motives."

" Oh! for heaven's ſake! do not interfere in
" that ſtile. You will alarm her pride, and ſink
" me for ever in her opinion. Beſide, you will
" utterly prevent any future effort on my part
" gently to reſtrain thoſe very agreeable ſpirits
" which may be liable to miſconſtruction. To
" own the truth, I thought to-night ſhe attracted
" particular attention."

" Her prudence," exclaimed the earl, who, though he had imbibed the poiſon of inſinuation, was yet offended by a direct attack, " is as ex-
" emplary as her character is ſpotleſs."

" True," replied Fitzoſborne, " but think of
" the malignity of the world."

" Who dares to impeach her conduct?" continued her lord, with increaſed violence.

" What does not envy and calumny dare?" cried the ſentimental torturer. " But I ſee my friendſhip is troubleſome. However, Monteith, recollect, that you artfully wound the ſecret out
" of me, and therefore have no right to be diſ-
" pleaſed at the diſcloſure."

" Your hand, Edward. Excuſe my warmth.
" My wife is too dear to me, to allow me to hear
" the leaſt cenſure caſt upon her behaviour with
" indifference. I venerate the excellence of
" your heart, and I love your frankneſs. I am
" frank myſelf, though I own I did uſe a little
" circumlocution to diſcover what you certainly
" never intended me to know. I was too ſub-

tle

" tle there. Was I not? But come, think no
" more of it. Perhaps lady Monteith might be
" a little wrong; but I know you both meant
" well, and ſhe will readily forgive you."

" Then, as a pledge of your renewed eſteem,
" let me entreat you never to mention this affair
" to her. I may have been too ſuſceptible, and
" have miſtaken her ſilence for reſentment; for
" I am convinced I miſconſtrued her preceding
" behaviour."

Monteith pledged his honour for ſecrecy, and endeavoured to diſſipate his chagrin by humming an air. But the idea that Fitzoſborne had ſeen ſomething wrong in Geraldine, and his recollection of the ſtranger's converſation, ſunk deep into his mind, and clouded the gay vacuity of his thoughts with ſpectres fearful as " the green-eyed monſter" which haunted the frank and noble Moor, who, like lord Monteith, " thought
" men honeſt who but ſeemed to be ſo."

CHAP. III.

No might nor greatneſs in mortality
Can Cenſure 'ſcape; back-wounding Calumny
The whiteſt virtue ſtrikes.

SHAKESPEARE.

VICE always appears to be more alluring when its machinations are crowned with ſucceſs. During the dangerous period of youth, while the paſſions are warm, the imagination lively, and the judgment weak, the ſpectator feels a bias in favour of that adventurer whoſe courſe (marked by

by ingenuity) leads to a ſpeedy attainment of his deſires. But could inexperience reflect, and impetuoſity pauſe, the couch of even the moſt proſperous villain would preſent no alluring ſpectacle. Fitzoſborne's plans had hitherto anſwered his wiſhes. His ſpecious manners had acquired the eſteem of the counteſs, and the unbounded confidence of her lord. He had obtained a firm footing in the family; had ſown the baleful germ of ſuſpicion, ſo fatal to domeſtic peace; and the diſpleaſure and gloom which occaſionally pervaded lord Monteith's countenance convinced him that it had taken root. Calumny was prepared to doubt the ſtability of Geraldine's honour; and calumny, like a peſtilential blaſt, can taint the innocence it aſſails. To theſe engines of ſeduction might be added the ſophiſtical principles of falſe philoſophy, which, though cautiouſly adminiſtered and often rejected, ſtill, like the delved mine, poſſeſs a power capable of ſubverting the firmeſt moral virtue, if not founded on the rock of religion.

Yet Fitzoſborne was wretched. The atrocity of his deſigns haunted his pillow, not with a ſenſe of remorſe, but with the apprehenſion of danger. The ſituation of the lady was exalted; her character was exemplary; her connexions were reſpectable; her huſband, as he had lately diſcovered, was not only tenacious of her reputation, and vain of her attractions, but alſo conſcious of her merits, and ſincerely attached to her perſon. Though the earl's apprehenſion was peculiarly ſlow, his paſſions were as remarkably vehement; and his ſkill at the various offenſive weapons was ſo great, that his opponent could have very little chance of eſcaping with life, if called to make the *amende honorable*. Fitzoſborne's fortunes were

almoſt

almoſt deſperate. Worldly prudence ſeemed, therefore, to point out the neceſſity of applying his ingenuity in deviſing ſome plan of improving his circumſtances, inſtead of waſting his talents in a purſuit which only promiſed danger, or, to ſpeak according to his ideas, "barren honour."

Notwithſtanding the appearance of open hoſtility, he held a private correſpondence with the viſcount's family; and his intelligence from thence confirmed his own opinion, that the breach with lady Arabella was not totally irreparable.—Her vexation at his attention to lady Monteith was too lively to be concealed, and too ſincere to yield to the hopes which the noble duke's increaſing admiration inſpired. In vain did ſhe recollect detecting him incognito at the theatre, looking at her through his opera glaſs. In vain did ſhe remember her more ſplendid triumph, when he preſented her with a ticket for lady Fillagree's fancied ball, inſcribed "To the faireſt." Fitzoſborne ſaw his aſſiduities without emotion. The noble duke's ſentiments were known to be inauſpicious to marriage; and no lady, who had not abſolutely determined to be a ducheſs, could even affect to find ſatisfaction in his converſation.

Fitzoſborne poized the chance of lucrative advantage with preciſion; and as he had no inclination for ſleeping in the bed of honour, he beſtowed ſome forethought on the hazards he ran by purſuing his illicit deſigns againſt the lovely counteſs. Since he deemed his ſucceſs certain, it was unneceſſary to examine the effect of a diſappointment. Great prudence, great caution, and great morality, might prevent a *rencontre*. He might be unwilling to lift his arm againſt the life of his friend; he might reſpect the laws of his country;

or

or his health might impoſe the neceſſity of a tour for its reſtoration. The laſt ſtep would be the moſt convenient, in caſe lord Monteith applied for legal damages, ſince, however large the ſum given by the verdict, abſence and incapacity would be a receipt in full. The next ſtep of the injured huſband muſt be a divorce, and the deſerted lady could not object to taking refuge in a ſecond marriage, which was the only chance of reſtoring her again to the world, if not with untainted, at leaſt with a convaleſcent character. Geraldine was an heireſs, and it was to be ſuppoſed that her ſettlements were made with proper precaution. Even as a wife ſhe was infinitely more deſirable than Arabella; and, though the illiberality of huſbands might wiſh to ſecure their domeſtic poſſeſſions by an impaſſable incloſure, modern ſpirit had proved itſelf able to ſurmount every fence; and the lady might give away herſelf and her property ſeveral times over, without calling upon death to cancel a former bond. The world indeed would at firſt be angry; but the times were very liberal. People would allow for the force of *irreſiſtible* temptation. They would plead, that it was impoſſible to forbear adoring ſuch a charming creature. The blame would be happily transferred to my lord, who ought never to have admitted a friend into his family, or to have truſted her out of his ſight; and in a little time every body would viſit Mr. Fitzoſborne and his lady, and perhaps even find them out to be a very worthy and exemplary pair.

Confirmed in his deſigns not more by his own inſidious inclinations than by the falſe notions which prevail even amongſt the more principled part of that important circle called the great world, Fitzoſborne proſecuted his nefarious plans;

plans; and he determined, that if fear, or as he called it prudence, did not check, compunction ſhould not diſſuade. Chance, and the credulous confidence of Lord Monteith, favoured his wiſhes. Cards of invitation to lady Fillagree's *petit ſoupé* had been ſent to the Monteiths, and the counteſs had not only choſen her character, but ſhe had alſo decorated an Italian tiffany with feſtoons of violets, in which dreſs ſhe intended to perſonify the Perdita of Shakeſpeare. Her anxious entreaties had prevailed upon her lord to accompany her in the habit of the royal Florizel; and this mark of attachment on her part, and condeſcenſion on his, promiſed the renewal of domeſtic harmony. The expected evening approached, when a note from the miniſter requeſted lord Monteith's attendance in the houſe of peers. Buſineſs of great importance was to be agitated; a violent oppoſition was expected; and the honour of his lordſhip's ſupport would confer a laſting obligation. The earl was not in the habit of courting miniſterial favour; he diſliked the taſk of attendance; and the labour of liſtening to a long debate was always ſufficiently terrific to make him prejudge the queſtion. Yet though no one ever took leſs pains to acquire real authority, he was very well pleaſed to be thought a man of conſequence; and the miniſter's requeſt was too preſſing to be declined. Geraldine wiſhed to give up her engagement; but my lord had fixed upon a plan that would ſettle every thing, and to which his own diſlike of maſked balls and fancy ſuppers gave a determinate ſtability. It was, that Fitzoſborne, inſtead of ſpending the evening alone in the library, ſhould be her eſcort. My lord's dreſs would fit him pretty exactly, and Edward's excuſes anſwered the end

for which they were deſigned, which was to fix my lord moſt poſitively in his determinations.

The entertainment was to be given at a villa a little diſtance from town. Geraldine dreſſed early; but her heavy heart ſeemed to anticipate ſome diſaſtrous iſſue. My lord came into her dreſſing-room to ſee if ſhe looked her character; and while he contemplated the ſimplicity and exquiſite adaption of her ornaments, the apprehenſions with which he had been lately tortured returned. "Do not," ſaid he, "dance with "Vernon, nor any of that ſet, if they ſhould aſk "you. Plead that you are engaged to Fitzoſ-"borne, or elſe ſay that you are tired."

"Will not that have a "ſingular appear-"ance?" inquired the counteſs.

"You have a ſtrange apprehenſiveneſs of ſin-"gularity, Geraldine. Don't you remember "your father's words, that there is no ſhame in "being the only perſon who acts as ſhe ought to "do?"

"Suppoſe then," ſaid her ladyſhip, "I do not "dance at all."

"What! when all the world knows that you "are very fond of dancing? Is that the way to "avoid ſingularity?" "And why this averſion to "my friend? Cannot you forgive him for offer-"ing you ſome advice which you was too care-"leſs to attend to?"

"My dear lord, there has been ſome little "miſunderſtanding, certainly. I am far from "having any averſion to Fitzoſborne, and as far "from being offended at his giving me any ad-"vice. I do not even recollect the circumſtance."

"O! you give it that turn, do you? But "you underſtand my preſent prohibition, I ſup-"poſe, and you will remember it."

"Undoubtedly.

"Undoubtedly. And do you recollect, that "depending upon your accompanying me, I "have not formed any party. If poſſible come "away from the houſe, and join me at Rich-"mond."

"You are grown a coward, Geraldine.—"However I will come, if I can; but Fitzoſ-"borne is ſurely a ſufficient guard. Tell Ara-"bella to do that worthy fellow juſtice, or I "ſhall diſown her for my ſiſter."

The vivacity of lady Monteith had received ſo ſevere a check that ſhe could not recover her ſpirits during her ride to lady Fillagree's. Fitzoſborne diſcovered her dejection. "I know," ſaid he, "ſuch ſolitude is often very trouble-"ſome; yet the fervency of my friendſhip will "not permit me to ſee you diſpirited without en-"quiring into the cauſe of your depreſſion."

"It is ſo wholly feminine," returned ſhe, "that it is abſolutely undefinable, and muſt be "ſet down in the catalogue of my unaccounta-"bles, unleſs I ſhould give as a reaſon, what I "am very unwilling to admit; I mean, an idea "of my lord's, that ſome time or another I did "not treat your good advice with ſufficient de-"ference. Pray, Fitzoſborne, when did you "play the moraliſt; and when was I ſuch a re-"fractory pupil?"

"Ah Monteith! this is one of thy miſconcep-"tions. I will explain the whole affair, ma-"dam, though it is too ridiculous to merit repe-"tition. You recollect the night we were to-"gether at the opera."

"Perfectly."

"And that in return to ſome obſervations "which I made on the behaviour of lady Ara-

" bell, you ſaid, diſappointment had made me
" ſplenetic ?"

" I do."

" Lord Monteith heard your anſwer as he en-
" tered the box; and he will perſiſt in his opi-
" nion, that my expreſſions were pointed at you,
" as a reproof for ſomething in your manner to
" Vernon. I muſt excuſe him by ſaying, that
" he was a little fluſtered. I followed him to
" Brookes's, where we ſoon adjuſted——"

" To Brookes's! Does my lord frequent
" Brookes's ?"

" O you tempter! No; I have too much ho-
" nour to reveal ſecrets. The affair was ſoon
" explained, I was going to ſay;—for Monteith
" really has a very good heart, which excuſes a
" little accidental puzzle-patedneſs."

Geraldine coloured; but her Proteus compa-
nion gave her no time to reſent. Looking out of
the chariot window, he relapſed into ſentiment.
" See, dear lady Monteith," ſaid he, " how the
" giddy throng haſten to this feſtival of oſtenta-
" tious vanity. A reflecting mind, on contem-
" plating this crowd of carriages, muſt feel other
" ſenſations than thoſe of pleaſure. Not to men-
" tion the ſufferings of theſe noble animals who
" draw the vehicles of tyrant man, the ſituation
" of maſter and ſervant, as exhibited upon the
" preſent occaſion, is enough to cure the moſt
" obdurate heart of its partiality for thoſe diſtinc-
" tions of rank which corrupt ſociety now exhi-
" bits. How repugnant to the feelings of uni-
" verſal love is that pale emaciated footman, who,
" expoſed to the inclemency of the ſeaſons, ſuſ-
" pends the flambeau over the carriage of his vo-
" luptuous maſter! How remote muſt that man
" ſtill be from the ultimate perfection of his na-

" ture,

" ture, who can enjoy the pleaſures of a crowded " aſſembly, while his coachman quakes in the " warping wind, or ſhrinks beneath the pelting " ſtorm! It is the cruelty of a Mezentius: The " living body is united to putridity."

" There is ſome juſtice in your obſervations," ſaid the counteſs; " and it behoves us as *indi-* " *viduals* to leſſen the evils of that inequality " which public good requires." The carriages now ſtopped; and as Fitzoſborne led her to the gay aſſemblage of beauty, fancy and elegance, her reflections on his character concluded with an obſervation, that " his very failings leaned to " the ſide of virtue."

The ball went on very much like other balls. Sir Richard Vernon and ſeveral gentlemen of his caſt of character were preſent, and Geraldine complied punctually with her lord's injunction, either to ſit down, or to dance with Fitzoſborne. She had forgot to account for his appearing in a dreſs ſo correſpondent to her own; and when ſome ladies, by pointing it out, alarmed her ſenſe of propriety, her explanation was embarraſſed, and conſequently ſuſpicious. As at the opera, Fitzoſborne's attentions were confined to her; and his elegant addreſs and polite vivacity added the ſneer of envy to the whiſper of detraction. Lady Arabella had indeed the honour to move down one dance with the duke; but his grace was ſo fatigued by the exertion, that he was obliged to renounce dancing, and to have recourſe to Caſſino for the reſt of the evening. Her ſucceeding partners ranked no higher than commoners, without poſſeſſing any of the innate diſtinctions which gave celebrity to the partner of Fitzoſborne. He had only bowed to her in the moſt diſtant manner poſſible. Her ſmile of invitation

was

was unanſwered; and ſhe began to think a fainting fit was the only chance of rouſing the monſter's attention. She performed it in the greateſt perfection; but on opening her eyes ſhe felt a little mortification to find, that neither he nor the counteſs appeared in the circle which had gathered round her. Another glance convinced her, that they were not in the room.

"The heat of this apartment," ſaid the lovely ſufferer, "is inſupportable. Do, my deareſt "Harriet, lend me your arm, and let me breath "a little pure air in the veſtibule." The viſcounteſs complied, and the miſtreſs of the ceremony with ſeveral other ladies accompanied the fair invalid.

Lady Arabella caſt a ſcrutinizing glance upon the ſuite of chambers through which ſhe was led; but ſhe deſcended into the veſtibule without making any diſcovery. It had been converted into an orangery for the occaſion, and decorated with a variety of lamps taſtefully ſuſpended. The many-coloured light trembling on the fragrant exotics, the freſhneſs of the air, the ſtillneſs of the ſcene, and the extenſive view which it admitted of the "ſtars in all their ſplendor" and "the moon "walking in brightneſs," afforded a ſtriking contraſt to the glittering but artificial ſcene which they had juſt left. Lady Arabella and her friends were not the only admirers of its enchanting effect, for at the upper end ſtood the counteſs and Fitzoſborne.

"Pray let us go back," ſhrieked lady Arabella, who however did not much doubt their identity. "I am quite frightened. Somebody is "here." The lady of the houſe declared, that it could be nobody whom ſhe could object to, while

while the charitable viſcounteſs whiſpered, "that "it would be rude to interrupt a private party."

"O! not for the univerſe," exclaimed Arabella. I would die a thouſand deaths rather than "be rude."

The counteſs advanced with an air of eaſy dignity, which the inquiſitive looks of the other ladies ſoon diſcompoſed. "Bleſs me," ſiſter," ſaid the candid Arabella, "I really did not think "it was you."—"And Edward too," continued the ſignificant lady Fitzoſborne; "how do you "do? There is no ſuch thing as catching your "attention for one moment this evening. How "came your auſterity to condeſcend to viſit theſe "tinſel amuſements?"

"Pardon me, madam," ſaid Edward, bowing reſpectfully to lady Arabella, "thoſe amuſements "cannot be tinſel which have the power of at-"tracting ſterling merit." Her ladyſhip did not deign to take the leaſt notice of his ſubmiſſion, but continued whiſpering the counteſs: "So you "have one conſtant *ceciſbeo* I ſee, and Monteith "ſtays at home. Very ſingular, I vow. But "was you not afraid of taking cold during this "long converſation?"

"No," replied Geraldine with recovered compoſure; our converſation was too intereſting "for me to think of cold. What if I ſhould tell "you, Arabella, that ſome part of it related to "yourſelf. "But you really treat your faithful "ſwain's advances in too contemptuous a ſtile "for me to begin my requeſted interceſſion, or "even to deliver to you a meſſage from your "brother on the ſame ſubject."

The party had now re-entered the houſe, when the counteſs, turning, ſaid to Fitzoſborne, "You "forget Miſs Parker."—"Where is Miſs Parker?"

" ker?" was the general inquiry. " In the " orangery," ſaid lady Monteith. " No, ma- " dam, I am here," echoed a ſhrill voice, which iſſued from one of the ladies who accompanied lady Arabella.

" Miſs Parker could not have been left in the " orangery," obſerved the viſcounteſs. " Your " ladyſhip was certainly miſtaken. She came " down ſtairs with us."

" And ſhe was the firſt who ſupported me " when I fainted," ſaid lady Arabella, who, in her eagerneſs to detect a ſuppoſed criminal, for- got, that fainting people do not always know what paſſes.

" She accordingly accompanied me into the " orangery," repeated lady Monteith.

Miſs Parker, who was no other than the " an- " tiquated belle" at the opera, now came for- ward, and with a reſpectful curteſy begged leave to explain: " I certainly accompanied your lady- " ſhip and Mr. Fitzoſborne down ſtairs, when " you did me the honour to aſk me; but while " your ladyſhip was engaged with him in look- " ing at the ſtars, I found it was very cold, and I " was afraid of my old attack in my ſhoulder; " ſo I thought I would ſtep and fetch my pellice; " and I believe your ladyſhip and the gentleman " were too much occupied to perceive that I was " gone."

A ſarcaſtic ſmile, which lady Fillagree's polite- neſs could ſcarcely reſtrain her from joining, fol- lowed this narrative, when Edward, like Joſeph Surface, promiſed to give a full and ſatisfactory account of the matter. He ſaid, that on his men- tioning that he had obſerved a beautiful Jacobea lily in full blow as they entered, lady Monteith and Miſs Parker had expreſſed a wiſh to pay it

more

more attention; that he had the honour to escort them; and that, after admiring the flower, her ladyship was suddenly struck by the splendor of some particular constellations, when lady Arabella entered.

Another general smile ensued, and Geraldine, no longer able to rally her spirits, ordered her chariot; and, telling Miss Parker she would set her down at her own door, she relieved the ladies from the pain of suppressed merriment, by taking leave.

CHAP. IV.

Conscience, what art thou? Thou tremendous power!
Who dost inhabit us without our leave;—
How dost thou light a torch to distant deeds!
Make the past, present, and the future, known!
How, ever and anon, awake the soul,
As with a peal of thunder!

YOUNG.

THE supposed secret, mentioned in my last Chapter, was of too much importance to be confined to the discoverers. By means of the happy art of innuendoes, the initiated soon disseminated it through the whole circle, in the politest manner imaginable. One lady observed, that the adventures of the third Eloisa would soon be published: another affirmed, that it would be called Werter the Second, with a different catastrophe: a third wished to read the Chapter on Botany: a fourth thought that that on astronomy would contain the most astonishing discovery: a fifth

allowed, that aſtronomy and botany were both very ſuitable ſtudies for ſhepherds and ſhepherdeſſes; and every body hoped that the adventures of the poor little lady, who had loſt her pellice, and got the rheumatiſm, would be inſerted. The ſarcaſms of the viſcounteſs were peculiarly piquant; for hers was the moſt ſuſpected character in company; and it is an invariable rule with ladies of her caſt, that the odium with which you beſpatter a neighbour's reputation has a retroactive effect in furbiſhing your own. Her indignation was chiefly pointed at lord Monteith, who, ſhe ſaid, was certainly anxious to obtain the honour of being a cornuto; and her idea was thought to be the more judicious, as it was known to correſpond with the ſentiments of the noble viſcount her huſband. Envy, idleneſs, the love of ſaying good things, and a dearth of converſation, aſſiſted her to propagate the ſtory. For two days the town talked of nothing elſe, and every relater could add circumſtances of freſh atrocity. In two days more, the truth of theſe adventitious circumſtances became doubtful, and, being proved unfounded, the whole fabric fell with them to the ground. At the end of the week every bodywas heartily ſorry for the dear miſrepreſented counteſs; and every body, forgetting the part they had themſelves taken, heartily wiſhed that ſome law might be invented to prevent defamation.—But to return to the object of theſe inquiſitorial proceedings.

The lovely Geraldine plainly perceived the malicious explanation that had been given to an incident which Fitzoſborne had faithfully explained. The love of diſtinction was, as I have before obſerved, one of her ruling foibles; but ſhe ſought to gratify it by the nobleſt means. Her

ſpotleſs

ſpotleſs fame added luſtre to the ſplendor of her talents and the attractions of her beauty. She had ever been named as one of thoſe few, who, in a degenerate age, afforded a happy inſtance of the poſſible union of propriety and faſhion. To have the goodly edifice which ſhe had reared with ſuch aſſiduous care at once deſtroyed; to have her unſullied name become the jeſt of witlings and the aſſociate of wilful depravity, was inſupportable. Even ſuppoſing that the candid hearer would reject the calumnious aſſertion, ſhe could not endure the very idea of having her character expoſed to ſuſpicious diſcuſſion. She ſat ſilent in the chariot, the tear of anguiſh ſtealing down her cheek, incapable of attending to Miſs Parker's narrative, whoſe regret about the pellice furniſhed her with a ſubject of lamentation till they arrived in town.

Fitzoſborne read lady Monteith's ſentiments. He rightly judged that this keen ſenſibility would prove injurious to his audacious deſigns; and he determined to exert his inſidious arts to ſubdue it. The earl was not returned from the Houſe. The counteſs wiſhed him good night, and paſſed on to her dreſſing-room. Fitzoſborne followed her to the door. "Excuſe my anxiety," ſaid he; "your look does not indicate a wiſh for repoſe. "Will you allow me to ſit with you till Monteith "returns?" She replied, that ſhe was not in ſpirits for company; and after a pauſe, "It is in "vain," ſaid ſhe, "to diſguiſe my feelings, Fitz-"oſborne; and you know the cauſe of my diſ-"treſs."

"I know nothing that can juſtify, or at leaſt "deſerve, thoſe tears. Deareſt lady Monteith, "for Heaven's ſake, conquer that emotion, which "increaſes the miſanthropy I long have felt at

"the

" the narrow prejudice and illiberality of the " world."

" You are always tilting againſt thoſe wind- " mill giants," returned Geraldine with a languid ſmile. " It is of the ſpirit of detraction and in- " conſiderateneſs that I complain; of that cruel " levity, which ſports with what is dearer than " life."

" Nay, now you urge your ſenſibility too far. " It is weakneſs, not delicacy, to put our hap- " pineſs ſo much in the power of others. Have " you forgotten that beautiful ſentiment, 'The " conſcious mind is its own awful world?'

" I grant its propriety only with reſpect to the " tortures of guilt; for can innocence be inſen- " ſible of the value of reputation?"

" It may diſprove ſlander by deſpiſing it, and " by acting with marked contempt of its petty " machinations. The tale you ſeem to appre- " hend is too poor, too contemptible for belief. " I have but one fear reſpecting its public ex- " poſure."

" What fear?"

" If lord Monteith ſhould hear it."

" If he ſhould, what have I to dread?"

" The warmth of his character; his irritable " impetuoſity; his ſuſpicious——"

" Suſpicious, did you ſay? How muſt I be " degraded, Mr. Fitzoſborne, in his opinion! " To ſuſpect me after four years experienced " confidence! And what muſt the world think " of me, if even my firſt, my deareſt friend " doubts my rectitude?"

" I know that angels are not purer; and when " Monteith recollects himſelf, his judgment will " tell him the ſame. He is now a little warped; " an unhappy ill-grounded apprehenſion—a ſmo- " thered ſpark nearly extinguiſhed by reaſon,

" which

" which this ridiculous ſtory may revive;—and " ſuſpicion in a character like his muſt be terri- " ble."

Geraldine leaned almoſt fainting againſt the wainſcot. A deadly paleneſs was diffuſed over her intelligent face, and her heart panted with apprehenſive terror. None, except a Domitian or a Fitzoſborne, who delight in torture, but muſt have pitied her agonies.

The traitor did indeed affect to pity. He dropped upon his knew, and uttered every rhap- ſodical expreſſion which the moſt guileful art could dictate. " Deareſt lady Monteith, for " Heaven's ſake be compoſed—my tortured heart " bleeds to ſee your anguiſh—moſt injured— " moſt lovely ſufferer—Oh richly worthy of a " better fate—Impart your anguiſh to the faith- " ful friend who would die to relieve it."

The laſt words recalled her recollection. " Riſe, ſir," ſaid ſhe with becoming dignity. " My ſituation does not call for the active offices " of friendſhip. You ſay I am injured. In " what? From what motive do you torture me " with ſuſpenſe? You ſeem to poſſeſs ſome fatal " ſecret reſpecting me. If I ought to know the " evil you allude to, tell me at once, that I may " arm my ſoul with fortitude to ſuſtain my tri- " als, or detect the calumny which ſports with " my peace."

Edward was diſconcerted. He had hoped that ſo much friendſhip might have ſurpriſed her into a little acknowledgment. And he perceived with regret that many a ſummer's ſun muſt ſtill riſe to mature his villany. He had never yet en- countered the reſiſtance of a firm ſuperior mind, or ſo ſtrongly ſeen the " lovelineſs of virtue in " her own form," or " felt how awful goodneſs is."

is." Yet, more remorſeleſs than the Prince of Darkneſs, "he pined not at his own loſs."

The ſophiſts, who in theſe evil days are falſely called enlightened, affect not to palliate their own vices by pleas of neceſſity and frailty, whatever diſguiſe they may aſſume to expedite their ſucceſs with others. Aſpiring to a pre-eminence in impiety, which former times feared to arrogate, they ſin upon principle, promulgate ſyſtems to juſtify iniquity, and proſcribe repentance by a morality which overturns every reſtraint, and a religion that prohibits nothing but devotion. Combining Pagan ſuperſtitions with the exploded reveries of irrational theoriſts, they place at the head of their world of chance a ſupine material God, whom they recogniſe by the name of Nature, and pretends that its worſhip ſuperſedes all other laws human and divine. By the ſide of this circumſcribed Deity they erect the idol ſhrine of its vicegerent, Intereſt; by the monſtrous doctrines, that "whatever is profitable is right," that "the end ſanctifies the means," and that "human actions ought to be free," they diſſolve the bonds of ſociety; and, after conducting their bewildered followers through the mazes of folly and guilt, in ſearch of an unattainable perfection, their views terminate at laſt in that fallacious opiate which infidelity preſents, "the eternal ſleep of death."

When poſterity ſhall know that theſe principles characteriſe the cloſe of the eighteenth century, it will ceaſe to wonder at the calamities which hiſtory will then have recorded. Such engines are ſufficiently powerful to overturn governments, and to ſhake the deep-founded baſe of the firmeſt empires. Should it therefore be told to future ages, that the capricious diſſolubility

lity (if not the abſolute nullity) of the nuptial tie and the annihilation of parental authority are among the blaſphemies uttered by the *moral* inſtructors of theſe times: ſhould they hear, that law was branded as a vain and even unjuſt attempt to bring individual actions under the reſtrictions of general rule; that chaſtity was defined to mean only individuality of affection; that religion was degraded into a ſentimental effuſion; and that theſe doctrines do not proceed from the pen of *avowed* profligates, but from perſons *apparently* actuated by the deſire of improving the happineſs of the world: ſhould, I ſay, generations yet unborn hear this, they will not aſcribe the annihilation of thrones and altars to the ſucceſsful arms of France, but to thoſe principles which, by diſſolving domeſtic confidence and undermining private worth, paved the way for univerſal confuſion.

Stimulated by that zeal for making proſelytes, which marks the miſſionaries of theſe doctrines, Fitzoſborne had hoped to goad his victim into the ſnares of infidelity by the corroding pangs of previous guilt. Her unaffected agony at the idea of her huſband's doubting the propriety of her conduct and the rectitude of her heart, could only be inſpired by connubial tenderneſs and real delicacy. The bluſh of generous indignation which kindled upon her cheek at the ſuppoſition that Edward's inſinuations might proceed from ſiniſter views, and the calm contempt with which ſhe treated the little arts of ſeduction to which female vanity has ſometimes yielded, convinced him that all his attempts to overturn her high-ſeated honour would be ineffectual, unleſs he could weaken the bonds of conjugal attachment, or remove the ſtrong bulwark of conſcious immortality,

mortality, which gave energy to her principles and ſtability to her virtue. Her native ſagacity aſſured him, that all theſe attempts muſt be made with caution; but his poiſonous noſtrums, once introduced, would work with ſilent vigour. If the conflict of the paſſions ſhould not be ſufficiently ſtormy in her temperate mind to eraſe the belief of future retribution, her thirſt after knowlege might entangle her in metaphyſical ſubtilties. The love of diſtinction and the allurements of example might induce her to add one more to thoſe courageous females who conceive that the character of a woman is not entirely diveſted of weakneſs till ſhe defies Omnipotence; while unrequited tenderneſs and unrewarded deſert muſt eſtrange an exquiſitely ſuſceptible heart from its unworthy maſter, and direct its affections to the ſpecious blandiſhments of an unprincipled impoſture.

Fitzoſborne's anſwer to Geraldine's ſpirited appeal was dictated by the moſt conſummate art. He proteſted that he had no ſecret to divulge but what ſhe already knew; namely, that lord Monteith had unwarily imbibed ſome ſuſpicious apprehenſions from the marked admiration which ſir Richard Vernon had paid to her at the opera, and to which the incidental circumſtance of her being in remarkably good ſpirits that evening might contribute. He ſcarcely wondered at his friend's alarm, when he conſidered the free notions of the age, the baronet's libertine principles, the impetuoſity of lord Monteith's temper, and his extreme ſuſceptibility in a point of honour, which in his opinion probaby proceeded from the warmth of his conjugal attachment. He begged pardon for too deeply ſympathiſing in her uneaſineſs, but owned that his feelings were never

ver proof againſt the magic influence of female tears. The term "injured," which he perceived had alarmed her, was heedleſsly uttered, without any reference, at leaſt any deſigned one, unleſs it alluded to thoſe illiberal ſlanderers who attempted to aſperſe a character which he verily believed was the only exception to that general careleſſneſs of reputation too ſtrongly characteriſtic of the manners of the preſent race of married ladies.

"Calumny, my dear lady Monteith," continued he, "is now conſidered as the teſt of "faſhion; and, inſtead of ſhrinking from its peſ-"tilential attack, even women of virtue conceive "a ſlanderous paragraph in a morning paper to "be a kind of paſſport to celebrity; and, pleaſ-"ed with becoming an object of general atten-"tion, they wait very patiently for time to con-"fute what was untrue in the report. Your "extreme delicacy (for now that you are a little "recovered I cannot help remarking that it is too "exquiſitely ſuſceptible) and the peculiarity of "your lord's diſpoſition make me ſee the conſe-"quences of this affair in a more ſerious light "than I ſhould otherwiſe do: but as I am afraid "that neither of you will ever practiſe the philo-"ſophy which I ſhould aſſume on this ridiculous "occaſion, I can only ſay, that I ſhall be ready "to purſue any plan you ſhall ſuggeſt for my "conduct. Come, clear that penſive brow; "and be convinced, that Monteith may ſee other "men admire you without ſuppoſing that you "encourage their addreſſes."

This ſpeech had the deſired effect. It convinced the counteſs that ſhe ought to conceal from her lord every circumſtance in her own behaviour which excited the animadverſions of others;

others: and while her agitated ſpirits were ſomewhat conſoled by the hope that his diſpleaſure was now wholly confined to Vernon, ſhe ſaw the neceſſity of extreme caution, leſt it ſhould ultimately point at her. Her apprehenſions of ſome criminal intention in Fitzoſborne's paſſionate addreſs were tranſient. The extreme audacity and guilt annexed to the bare idea of his having formed an illicit attachment, and the abſolute impoſſibility of his even *hoping* for ſucceſs, perſuaded her, that his paſſionate language was only, as he affirmed it to be, the unpremeditated ſympathy of ſincere friendſhip; and ſhe now bluſhed at her own indelicacy in doubting, though but for a moment, the rectitude of his heart.

Eſteem and confidence are never ſo powerful as at the moment of removed ſuſpicion. She wanted an adviſer and confidant. Who could ſeem ſo proper to perform that office as the ſagacious, ſentimental Edward? The firſt ſcheme which lady Monteith propoſed to ſtop the circulation of the ſlanderous tale was, that Fitzoſborne ſhould immediately leave the family. The arch-tempter immediately ſignified his perfect acquieſcence; but with deference ſtated, that in his opinion ſuch an apparent coincidence with the prejudice of malevolence would tend to confirm its cenſure; and to his repeated advice to treat the whole ſtory with indifference and bravado, lady Monteith oppoſed her own poignant feelings, which would never permit her to go into company while conſcious that a whiſper was circulated to her diſadvantage. At length a compromiſe was agreed to between the oppoſite opinions, and Geraldine determined to take leave of the gay world with more than philoſophic diſtaſte of its levity and uncharitable aſperity.

Forget-

Forgetting that retirement had ſometimes ſuggeſted the wiſh of introducing her brilliant talents to the notice of more accurate obſervers, the envy, hatred, and detraction which impeded her career, made her again wiſh to take ſhelter in the quiet undiſputed ſuperiority which Powerſcourt or Monteith preſented. The preſence of caprice and affectation renewed her Lucy's remembrance, rendered the recollected ſweetneſs and ingenuouſneſs of her character ſtill more pleaſing, and ſtimulated her impatience to pour her ſorrows into the boſom of ſoothing friendſhip; or to heal her corroded heart by the gentle balm of parental tenderneſs. The propoſed alliance which had occaſioned her journey to London being to all appearance entirely fruſtrated, ſhe wiſhed to return to the pleaſing occupations of domeſtic life; and the claims of filial duty determined her to take Powerſcourt in her way to Scotland. To prevent any ſuſpicion, that her retreat was in conſequence of a breach between the earl and Fitzoſborne, it was propoſed, that the latter ſhould continue at Portland place till lord Monteith's parliamentary engagements terminated: and Geraldine entertained a private hope, that her lord's intereſt with miniſtry might procure ſome poſt which would tend to reconcile Edward to the ſevere blow which his fortunes had received by the rejection of lady Arabella; and at the ſame time convince the world, that caprice was not the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of all the Macdonald family.

Fitzoſborne now recurred to the converſation which had really been begun in lady Fillagree's orangery; and he debated the probable event of his renewing his addreſſes with ſo much ſeeming anxiety, and acted the part of the mortified

ſwain

ſwain with ſo much adroitneſs, as entirely removed every ſhadow of ſuſpicion from lady Monteith's mind, engaged her anew in the office of a conſoler, and even rouſed a degree of ſelf-accuſation at her having dared to ſuſpect that the morals of the virtuous Edward fell ſhort of the perfection to which they pretended. She lamented with pathetic ſweetneſs the depraved ſtate of female taſte, which gave a coxcomb infinite advantage over a man of ſenſe with the diſſipated belles of the day; and Fitzoſborne, reſigning all his hopes of conjugal felicity, with a profound ſigh declared, that in future he muſt tranquilliſe his troubled ſoul with the endearing ſympathy of female friendſhip. He proceeded with platonic delicacy to draw the mental portrait of ſuch a friend as he wiſhed to find: carefully including in the enchanting compoſition every grace which Geraldine ſeemed conſcious of poſſeſſing. Superior refinement, and an apprehenſiveneſs of even juſt praiſe, was mentioned with emphaſis; and while the orator ſtated the peculiar difficulty in which this elevated faſtidiouſneſs would place a ſuſceptible mind, impelled by warm eſteem to expreſs its admirrtion, yet reſtrained from ſpeaking by the certainty of offending, the counteſs liſtened with unſuſpecting delight: ſo true is the maxim,

> And while he tells her he hates flattery,
> She ſays ſhe does ſo, being then moſt flatter'd.

Lord Monteith interrupted the converſation at a late hour. He returned in very high ſpirits, not only elated by the triumph of his party, but with his own particular ſucceſs; having made a neat and appropriate ſpeech, conſiſting of three or four well-turned periods, which was honoured with

with profound attention. His lordſhip was leſs quick in diſcovering improprieties than in reſenting them when pointed out by others. Fitzoſborne's ſitting alone with his lady, at five o'clock in the morning, alarmed him no more than Fitzoſborne's eſcorting her in a correſpondent dreſs to lady Fillagree's fancy-ball. He recounted the events which had taken place in the debate with too much eagerneſs to liſten to the narrative of her adventures. He only heard with pleaſure, that Vernon paid no attention to her, and that ſhe was perfectly in charity with her *cecisbeo*. So many agreeable occurrences made him readily conſent to her propoſal of paying her annual viſit to Caernarvonſhire immediately; and he was too ſincere a friend not to enter with eagerneſs into her plan of rendering Edward ſome pecuniary ſervices. His late diſplay of oratorical ability ſeemed to enſure ſucceſs; "for," ſaid he, "though "I want nothing from Government, why ſhould "not my friends reap ſome advantage from the "fatigue which I endure in the ſervice of my "country? Do you think that they dare refuſe "me, Geraldine, when they know how much "I am courted by Oppoſition?" He concluded by obſerving, that Edward's talents would do honour to any adminiſtration. His appearing in a conſpicuous line would alſo mortify Arabella, and convince her that ſhe ought to have reſpected her brother's *deeper* knowledge of manners and characters, and not have diſmiſſed a lover who was infinitely too good for her.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Meanwhile, by Pleaſure's ſophiſtry allur'd,
From the bright ſun and living breeze ye ſtray:
And, far in London's gloomy haunts immur'd,
Brood o'er your fortune's, freedom's, health's decay;
O blied of choice, and to yourſelves untrue!
The young grove ſhoots, their bloom the fields renew,
The manſion aſks its lord, the ſwains their friend;
While he does riot's orgies haply ſhare,
Or tempt the gameſter's dark deſtroying ſnare,
Or to ſome courtly ſhrine with laviſh incenſe bend.

AKENSIDE.

WHILE the earl of Monteith, with all the blunt ſincerity of his ardent character, purſued his friendly but unſucceſsful deſign of ſerving Fitzoſborne, the polite circles were very merry at his lordſhip's expence, every one wondering that he could not ſee what was ſo extremely viſible to every body elſe. As lady Monteith had by retirement ſubdued the acrimony of competition, even the candour of her rivals returned, and the tide of popular opinion grew ſtill ſtronger in her favour. Large allowances were made for a little vanity and a little indiſcretion. Moſt people ſincerely believed that, after all, her marked predilection for Fitzoſborne was nothing more than a harmleſs flirtation, perhaps entered into out of frolic, or with a view to mortify Arabella.—Theſe delicate extenuations were generally concluded

cluded by a laugh at his lordſhip's ſtaying in town to vindicate her character, and a fear, that ſuch uncommon good-humour on his part might encourage her to go greater lengths in her *mirth* than ſhe at firſt intended.

The annihilation of domeſtic happineſs opening the faireſt views for Fitzoſborne's ſucceſs, he determined to employ every engine for its deſtruction. The guarded honour of Geraldine had hitherto rejected his inſinuations to the diſadvantage of her lord with the warmth of confirmed affection, and the indignation which a conſciouſneſs of the inſeparable union between his reputation and her own muſt inſpire. But various inſtances had convinced him, that this "God of "her Idolatry" was vulnerable in a thouſand points; eaſily deceived, eaſily ſeduced, ſoon irritated, and as quickly pacified. The preſence of the counteſs, her ſuperior judgment, and the reſpect for the decencies of life, which his ſtrong attachment to her had inſpired, had hitherto preſerved him from any groſs acts of immorality, and given a decorum to his conduct which juſtified the confidence ſhe always placed in his behaviour. Fitzoſborne too plainly ſaw that there was no innate principle to preſerve Monteith in the hour of temptation, when his guardian angel was abſent from her charge. Thoſe temptations he reſolved to ſupply: he doubted not his own ability to environ him with ſnares, from which even a firmer virtue would find it difficult to eſcape; and yet at the ſame time to conceal his inſidious interference, and to cover his machinations with the proſtituted names of friendſhip, ſentiment and morality. Though lady Monteith's enlarged underſtanding had ſufficient diſcernment to diſcover calumny, and to treat unfounded

founded ſuſpicions with contempt, could ſhe reſiſt the evidence of truth? or could her feeling heart ſupport that cruel indifference which a diſſipated huſband always affects to ſhew to the amiable wife whom he injures by his vices? Her ſtrong ſuſceptibility at every circumſtance which threatened the diminution of their mutual regard convinced him that ſhe could not. And ſurely the reſentment which a young and beautiful woman muſt feel at ſuch injurious negligence would render her an eaſy prey to the wiles of a ſeducer. To ſuppoſe the contrary, was a paradox which his knowledge of the human character would not admit.

It is not my intention to pollute my page by a deſcription of thoſe ſucceſsful plans of iniquity by which Fitzoſborne ſubverted the principles of the man who really loved him, and felt anxious to render him eſſential ſervices. Unhappily, the world preſents too often the ſpectacle of one immortal being alluring another to inebriety, or plunging it in depravity, for me to excite ſurpriſe by adding, that ſuch actions are not deemed incompatible with the ſacred title of a friend. Theſe ſeducers have not indeed always the deeper motives which I aſcribe to Fitzoſborne; but let it be remembered, that the principles he profeſſed gave a ſanction to his more monſtrous atrocity. Private vices are public benefits. It is not a general advantage, that property ſhould be transferred from an indolent ſenſualiſt to an active intelligent enterpriſing citizen, who would turn it to beneficial purpoſes? Monteith would be juſt as happy with his dogs and horſes, the only ſphere of enjoyment which his limited underſtanding ſeemed capable of reliſhing, though his beautiful wife, and the fair poſſeſſions with which ſhe was endowed,

endowed, were reſigned to ſome clever fellow who had wit enough to acquire them. Suppoſing the reſtraint of conſcience conveniently ſilenced by that ſcepticiſm which is now eſteemed ſo liberal, what other principle will you ſubſtitute to prevent ſuch practices? Succeſs ſoon reconciles the world to the proſperous villain. A little declamation will ſatisfy ſentiment, and even the watchful dragon of honour may be charmed to ſleep by honied words. Gratitude, which uſed to rank next to integrity in the ſcale of virtues, is now, like its immediate predeceſſor, degraded from its proud pre-eminence. Refinement has diſcovered, that the giver beſtows not from benevolent motives, nor from affection to the receiver, but merely to relieve himſelf from the pain of an uneaſy emotion; and it has taught us to infer from theſe premiſes, that it would be weakneſs to feel obligation for benefits which wholly proceed from the all-invigorating principle of ſelf-love.

Entangled in the mazes of an illicit amour, begun in a moment of inebriety, and purſued from want of courage to be ſingular, and want of energy to be firm, the unhappy Monteith beheld his preſent ſituation with horror, and contemplated his paſt happineſs with vain regret. His little daughters, his Geraldine, his domeſtic tranquillity, his rural amuſements,—how forcible was the contraſt between thoſe guiltleſs pleaſures, and the clamour of a Bacchanalian revel, the corroding inquietude of a gaming-table, and the venal allurements of a courtezan.

Thouſand after thouſand vaniſhed at theſe midnight orgies. The image of his injured wife and ſupplicating infants conſtantly roſe to his view; but they only came to increaſe his deſperation, not to reſtrain his madneſs. The words,

" one more bottle, and another ſong! What, " Monteith a flincher? Come, my lord, luck " muſt change; make one more ſpirited effort:" and, " Can the deareſt of men, for whom I " have refuſed ſuch liberal offers, deſert me?" Such expreſſions formed the magic ſpells whoſe powerful incantations enthralled a mind, reduced to the deplorable ſtate of acting the part it abhorred, and adopting the vices it deſpiſed, leſt the votaries of diſſipation ſhould ſuſpect that he wanted courage to be wicked.

Fitzoſborne did not expoſe his untainted reputation by *appearing* in theſe ſcenes of depravity. He contented himſelf with pointing out parties which he entreated his lordſhip to avoid, or with mentioning inſtances of ſurpriſing turns of luck at the gaming-table which it would be folly in any one to expect. He exclaimed againſt Mrs. Harley's infamy, but acknowledged that ſhe was in the higheſt faſhion; that ſhe had rejected a much larger ſettlement than what ſhe now ſolicited from Monteith, which he hoped his lordſhip would have reſolution to refuſe; and yet, after all, as the ſtrong bias of the paſſions ſeemed to point out that ſuch temporary engagements were congenial to our natures, their criminality muſt wholly depend upon the circumſcribed, and perhaps erroneous, ſyſtems of political juriſprudence. He always concluded theſe powerful diſſuaſions by urging the peculiar ſeverity of lady Monteith's principles, and the conſequent neceſſity of concealing his miſconduct from her. He conjured him to haſten to Powerſcourt; and then added, what he knew would negative the propoſal, " How will you ſupport the tears and the " reproofs of that injured woman? For I fear, " my friend, that in ſpite of every prudent pre-

" caution,

" caution, your pale dejected looks, embarraſſed
" manner, and conſtrained vivacity, cannot fail
" of attracting her apprehenſive obſervation."

While the cruel machinations of Fitzoſborne thus aſſailed the honour of Geraldine by vitiating the mind of her huſband, the deſtined victim of his worſe than murderous deſigns enjoyed the ſoothing conſolation of pouring her ſorrow into the attentive ear of friendſhip. Ignorant of the ſeverer trials which immediately awaited her, the tranquillity of rural ſcenes, the benevolent ſimplicity of her revered father, the dignified reſignation of Mr. Evans, and the intereſting ſweetneſs of the amiable Lucy, conſpired to calm that painful conflict which undeſerved calumny and diſappointed hope had excited in her ſoul. The early carol of the lark, the dying fall of the nightingale, the kindling glory of a ſummer's morning, the reviving freſhneſs of the evening zephyr, the various delights which the country affords, and the attractive ſimplicity of its uncontaminated inhabitants, inſpired lady Monteith with ſtrong indignation againſt that faſtidious taſte which, while it degrades the majeſtic operations of Nature with the epithets of ordinary and vulgar, or paſſes them with ſtupid inſenſibility, purſues the celebrity required by the conſtruction of a carriage or the adjuſtment of a robe. Her cenſures againſt this petty ambition were, however, too warm to be the dictates of cool judgment, and evidently proved, that the fair declaimer had been once included in the frivolous groupe who pay a blind idolatry to popular eſteem. Diſappointment inſpired other notions; and, guided by this new impulſe, ſhe appeared once in her converſations with Miſs Evans to lean to the dangerous doctrines of Fitzoſborne. " When I reflect,"

ſaid ſhe, " on the evaneſcent nature of reputa-
" tion; that it is acquired without ſolicitude, and
" loſt without guilt; that it is the ſport of ca-
" lumny, and the battery from which envy mor-
" tally wounds the peace of innocence, I feel
" convinced that it is beneath the attention of a
" well-governed mind."

The converſation had been previouſly con-fined to the caprices of faſhion, and Miſs Evans was ſurpriſed that it ſhould produce ſuch a ſerious concluſion; for to this genuine child of nature the eclat annexed to the invention of a becoming turban, or even the honour of an innumerable party, ſeemed unworthy of a moment's anxiety. She therefore fixed her intelligent eyes upon her friend, and aſked her to what ſhe alluded in this reflection?

" My own ſad ſtory," ſaid Geraldine, " is
" ever predominant in my mind. Even while I
" am enjoying the delights of theſe beloved
" peaceful ſcenes, I cannot for one moment for-
" get that I am now a mark for public ridicule;
" and I am endeavouring to derive ſome conſola-
" tion from thoſe ſentiments which a gentleman,
" a very ſenſible man, and a friend of lord Mon-
" teith's, has frequently ſuggeſted."

" They can only apply," ſaid Lucy, " to the
" caſe of thoſe who place their *ultimate* hopes in
" the applauſe of the world. They have nothing
" to do with the well-grounded mind, which,
" while it purſues the ſteady path of duty, is
" pleaſed with being encouraged on its journey
" by the modeſt voice of well-earned praiſe.
" Far be it from me, my Geraldine, to ſeek to
" diminiſh your conſolations. Innocence allows
" you to poſſeſs a very ſuperior one; and while
" your life diſproves accuſations, you have no

" cauſe

" cauſe to be depreſſed. Yet the watchful ſuſ-
" ceptibility of female honour cannot but feel
" every attack upon its character; and it moſt
" impatiently longs to refute the cenſures which
" its purity abhors. Lord Monteith's friend, I
" ſuppoſe, only made general obſervations. He
" could not allude to your particular ſtory."

" They were the obſervations of Fitzoſborne," ſaid lady Monteith gravely.

" Of Fitzoſborne? interrogated Lucy. " I
" have heard you deſcribe him as one of the moſt
" enlightened, uncorrupted, and amiable of men:
" the perſon, too, reſpecting whom your con-
" duct is cenſured."

" It is exactly as you deſcribe. He is thus de-
" ſerving, and I am ſo accuſed."

" Does a fixed contempt for the good-will of
" that maſs of his fellow-creatures which is called
" the world, imply this ſuperior merit? The
" world, I have heard my dear father often ſay
" judges right, but from wrong premiſes. It is
" haſty and raſh, not diſpaſſionate and reflecting.
" It kindles into indignation at a ſpecious tale: it
" loads a ſuſpected character with opprobrium;
" but however falſe its inference, however miſ-
" taken its judgment, its errors always lean to
" the ſide of juſtice and virtue. And I am the
" more inclined to pay a deference to my father's
" opinion, becauſe I find his idea of that aggre-
" gate body of which I am an individual con-
" firmed by my own feelings."

" I ſhall only join the general deciſion of the
" world, which you ſo reverence," replied the counteſs, " when I ſound the praiſes of Mr.
" Fitzoſborne. To the manners and the exte-
" rior of the moſt finiſhed gentleman, he adds
" the information of the ſcholar, and the profun-

" dity

" dity of the philoſopher. Perhaps his ardent " love of truth may urge him to too great a con- " tempt for eſtabliſhed rules; and you know, " Lucy, we muſt not expect ſuperior minds to " pay a ſcrupulous attention to the little punctili- " lios which cuſtom exacts from ordinary cha- " racters. He is actuated by the moſt exalted " views, and his life is the nobleſt comment up- " on his opinions."

The limited obſervation of Miſs Evans had never diſcovered ſuch a being as lady Monteith deſcribed; and ſhe regarded the delineation of its diſtinguiſhed properties with ſomewhat of the ſame kind of ſcrupulous curioſity with which we peruſe the deſcription of the unicorn and the kraken; not abſolutely denying that ſuch things may exiſt, but wiſhing to have their reality more clearly identified. Her wiſh was ſoon gratified, and this human phœnix was introduced at Powerſcourt by an event in which chance (the modern term for Providence) had a ſmaller ſhare than *oſtenſibly* appeared.

The poſt always arrived at ſir William's in the afternoon; and though the good baronet had nothing of the baſhaw in his character, and was by no means an adept in the ſcience of politics, he conſtantly exerciſed an unlimited authority over the newſpaper, the contents of which he regularly recited, in an audible voice, to the party aſſembled round his hoſpitable board. The journal of paſſing occurrences which found admiſſion at ſir William's, was generally uncontaminated by private ſlander, party abuſe, or fulſome panegyric, and ſimply a plain narrative of the events of the day. It *happened* however, that after lady Monteith had ſpent about four months at her father's,

ther's, the following paragraph found admittance:

"It is rumoured in the polite circles, that a "certain miniſterial nobleman, in the vicinity of "P******d Place, finds ſufficient attractions "in the beautiful Mrs. Harley to conſole him "for his recent diſgrace; while a fair incon-"ſtant is trying, whether the keen air of the "C*********ſhire mountains may not be "beneficial to a conſumptive reputation. It is "ſaid, that lord M********'s ſettlements on his "new flame are uncommonly liberal."

Sir William was not verſed in the language of initials and aſteriſks; and was not in poſſeſſion of the decyphering gloſſary which a knowledge of polite ſcandal ſupplies. After two or three attempts to unravel the enigma, he delivered it to his daughter, with a requeſt that ſhe would tell him what it meant. A crimſon bluſh and a dying paleneſs alternately took poſſeſſion of her face while ſhe peruſed the paragraph. After coolly obſerving, that it was ſome very ill-natured nonſenſe, ſhe complained of faintneſs from the heat of the room, a circumſtance which her ſituation, being near her fourth confinement, might render oppreſſive. Miſs Evans's arm was ready to lead her to her own apartment, at the door of which ſhe entreated her friend to leave her, and to ſuperintend the backgammon party in her room, as ſhe much feared ſhe ſhould not be able to rejoin them that evening.

No alarm was excited that night by this circumſtance. Sir William's communications had been too confuſed to convey any explanation to his auditors, and any future appeal to the newſpaper for information was impoſſible, for it had ſuddenly diſappeared during the buſtle occaſioned by

by lady Monteith's faintneſs. But ſince the butler and the houſekeeper were both very great politicians, and very anxious to inſpect the conduct of adminiſtration, this circumſtance too frequently happened to bear at this time any myſterious air.

Geraldine's indiſpoſition wore next morning a more ſerious aſpect. Her maid owned, that ſhe had been extremely reſtleſs and agitated all night, and her pulſe indicated conſiderable fever. Sir William's parental tenderneſs took alarm. The moſt eminent medical aſſiſtance which the country afforded was called in, and an expreſs was diſpatched to town to ſummon her huſband.

The petrifying power of vice requires time before it can render the heart completely callous. Lord Monteith had not yet forgot his inimitable Geraldine, the mother of his pretty little girls, the founder of James-town, and the benign enchantreſs whoſe magic powers had converted the wild unfrequented ſhores of Loch Lomond into the reſidence of plenty, elegance, and happineſs. His recollection of the guiltleſs pleaſures once enjoyed in her ſociety aggravated his fears for her ſafety; nor could a thouſand Mrs. Harleys detain him from her bedſide. Endeavouring by the ſpeed of his return to atone for the criminality of his abſence, relays of horſes were ordered upon the road, and the exertions of the poſtboys were ſtimulated by additional douceurs. But lord Monteith is not the only furious driver that has found it impoſſible to travel from himſelf. New to the ſuggeſtions of remorſe, yet unable to divert the pain of its ſcorpion-ſting by the fallacious juſtification of comparing his own conduct with that of other men of faſhion, his troubled imagination continually placed before his

his eyes the frightful image of an amiable wife murdered by his vicious indifference; and his thoughts were alternately occupied by curſing his own folly, and frantickly addreſſing Heaven to ſpare a life which he now felt to be infinitely dearer than his own.

Such a ſituation called for the ameliorating offices of friendſhip, and the ſentimental, diſpaſſionate Fitzoſborne had claimed that pious taſk. To abate the reader's indignation againſt that gentleman's conduct, I muſt affirm, that it was afterwards ſatisfactorily proved, that the fatal paragraph which I have quoted was not communicated to the newſpaper editor in a hand-writing that bore the *leaſt* reſemblance to Edward's. I will alſo own, that his emotions during the journey to Powerſcourt were almoſt as poignantly diſtreſſing as thoſe of his fellow-traveller. Conſcience, indeed, was leſs loud in her accuſations, becauſe her ſenſibility had by frequent repreſſion been rendered more callous. But the probable diſappointment of thoſe plans of aggrandiſement which he had purſued with ſuch wicked diligence, haraſſed his apprehenſion; and he regretted, that human ſcience had not yet reached its ſummit of perfection, by preſenting to him the immortaliſing elixir that would enable him to diſpute with death for the poſſeſſion of the victim whom he had marked for a more dreadful deſtination.

CHAP. VI.

Dang'rous conceits are in their natures poiſons,
Which, at the firſt, are ſcarce found to diſtaſte;
But, with a little act upon the blood,
Burn like the mines of ſulphur.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE appearance of lord Monteith, when the carriage ſtopped at Powerſcourt, was ſufficiently deplorable to excite commiſeration even in thoſe boſoms which felt the ſtrongeſt abhorrence of his former conduct. Pale, and trembling with apprehenſion, he aſked if his lady were ſtill alive. On receiving an anſwer in the affirmative, he flew to her apartment, not reflecting upon the effect which his ſudden return might have. Fitzoſborne, poſſeſſed of a greater command of his own feelings, ſtopped him at the door, and, dragging him into an adjoining room, whiſpered to him, that prudence and compoſure were highly neceſſary. "If you ſee lady Monteith in "your preſent perturbation of ſpirits," ſaid he, "you will certainly become your own accuſer, "and perhaps lay the foundation for much fu- "ture miſery. Remember, poſſibly ſhe knows "nothing of Mrs. Harley's affair. For ſhame! "my friend, how you unman yourſelf by theſe "emotions."

"She lives," ſaid Monteith, lifting up his eyes, which, to the extreme mortification of Fitzoſborne, were ſuffuſed with tears. "If ſhe "had died, murdered by my infidelity, I would "not have ſurvived her."

Can

" Can you tell how her illneſs and your infi-
" delity can poſſibly be connected? If it pro-
" ceeds from her knowledge of your weakneſs,
" you have certainly cauſe to dread ſeeing her.
" I muſt entreat you, if you regard your repu-
" tation as a man of the world, or your autho-
" rity as the maſter of a family, do not let even
" your valet witneſs your diſorder."

He was prevented from proceeding by the appearance of ſir William Powerſcourt, whoſe benevolent heart had been deeply penetrated by a deſcription of his ſon-in-law's diſtreſs, though his paternal pride had previouſly ſtimulated to reſent the abſence which even his unſuſpicious temper had conſidered to be a neglect of his beloved daughter.

" Be compoſed, my lord," ſaid the good baronet, ſhaking him affectionately by the hand; " my dear child will do well, don't make your-
" ſelf ſo unhappy—ſhe will be very glad to ſee
" you, I aſſure you. She always names you
" with the greateſt tenderneſs."

" Dear injured excellence!" ſobbed Monteith.

" She never made one complaint of your ſtay-
" ing ſo long in London," continued ſir William. " Sometimes, indeed, ſhe ſaid, The
" houſe ſits late theſe turbulent times. Then,
" after parliament broke up, you had ſome buſi-
" neſs to get through to ſerve a friend. The
" phyſicians give us great hope of her to-day;
" and when you are a little more compoſed, I
" will let her know that you are come. Depend
" upon it, there will be no reproaches."

" Reproaches," reiterated Monteith, his eyes ſparkling with indignation; " I cannot bear re-
" proaches. Thoſe of my own heart are ſuffi-
" ciently

" ciently excruciating. I won't ſee her. Order " my horſes."

Fitzoſborne, who had watched every expreſſion with ſerpent wilineſs, here obſerved to ſir William, that travelling poſt with no reſt, and ſcarcely any refreſhment, had greatly deranged his friend's mind. " And I am fearful," ſaid he, " of ſome bad effects from the indiſcretion of a " ſervant, who hurried into lady Monteith's " apartment to announce the earl's arrival."

No other hint was neceſſary to remove ſir William; while Monteith, with clenched fiſt, traverſed the room in an agony which increaſed every moment.

" Am I expected to beg pardon?" exclaimed he to Fitzoſborne.

" If you go on accuſing yourſelf, and yield- " ing to theſe extravagancies, you invite impertinence, and muſt expect mortification. Lady " Monteith muſt be deſtitute of the ruling paſſion of her ſex, if ſhe does not make you feel " that ſhe knows her power over you. Remorſe, " my lord, like religion, is certainly a buſineſs " between a man and his own heart; yet, poſſibly, as ſir William lectures you upon one " head, Mr. Evans may think it right to treat " you with a little clerical freedom upon the " other."

" It is all known then," ſaid Monteith, throwing himſelf upon a ſofa; " and I am to be " ſtared at by country boors as a reprobate and " a libertine."

" Nothing is known, or can be known, if you " act with common propriety. Sir William " only talks of your ſtaying in town, and attending parliamentary buſineſs, when you " ought to have been nurſing your wife in the " country.

" country. Come, come, Monteith, go and " aſk her how ſhe does, without entirely aban- " doning all ſenſe of dignity. But that I ſcorn " to probe a penetrated heart, I could remind " you, that attention to my *former* counſels " would have prevented your preſent pangs."

Lord Monteith ſighed, and made another effort to viſit his counteſs. The high tone of ecſtaſy to which his feelings had been elevated on firſt hearing of her ſafety, was now conſiderably lowered; and he almoſt wiſhed that the ſeparating diſtance which he had ſo rapidly paſſed were ſtill between them, to protect him from the ſoul harrowing ſight of an injured, yet ſtill beloved object. " If," ſaid he to himſelf, " ſhe " utter one ſevere expreſſion; if ſhe look at " me with leſs tenderneſs, nay, if ſhe do but " even betray a knowledge of my folly, I am " loſt."

His apprehenſions, however, were groundleſs. Geraldine received him with that ſmile of ineffable ſweetneſs which generally irradiated her countenance. It was, indeed, no longer playfully animated; but its penſive languor conveyed even to his alarmed attention the idea of bodily ſuffering, rather than of mental anguiſh. After thanking him for the ſolicitude he had expreſſed, and which, ſhe ſaid, her dear father had pathetically deſcribed, ſhe congratulated him upon the birth of a ſon, who, though prematurely hurried into the world by her indiſpoſition, (here ſhe ſtifled a ſigh,) was yet, ſhe was happy to find, likely to live.

When Providence gratifies the clamorous wiſhes of us ſhort-ſighted mortals, it muſt not only give us the good that we aſk, but it muſt alſo adapt the time of its bounty to the moment of

of our desires. Eight months ago lord Monteith thought nothing but a son wanting to gratify all his wishes. He now started with deep remorse and dismay at the birth of a being, who seemed to rush into existence to reproach him for having wasted the fair possessions to which his ancestors had left him heir, in the frenzy of the gaming-table and the haunts of dissipation. The too susceptible countess read in his embarrassed manner a refutation of all the hopes which a description of his lively emotions on his return had inspired. She could no longer flatter herself with the idea that envy and falsehood had fabricated the paragraph so fatal to her peace, and nearly so to her life. She covered her beautiful face, pale as the pillow on which it rested, and, sobbing out an apology for an hysterical weakness which would not permit her to support the sight she had so earnestly desired, she entreated to be left alone. To recruit her enfeebled spirits was the plea that she urged; but her real design was to lament unobserved the peculiar hardships of her present fate.

The observations she made upon her lord's character had hitherto disclosed much inconsistency, weakness, and imperfection; but she had ever been consoled by the conviction, that his heart retained many traits of native goodness, and that his stormy passions, even in their wildest uproar, confessed the power of her gentle influence. Her delicacy shrunk at the thought of dividing his affections with a venal wanton; and the rectitude of her principles inspired the liveliest concern, when she recollected the guilt which her still-beloved lord incurred by pursuing an illicit attachment. Weak in body; enfeebled in mind; reduced by sufferings, and disappointed

appointed in her deareſt hopes; her pride wounded in its moſt ſuſceptible part, ſlighted by him whom ſhe moſt wiſhed to pleaſe; and traduced by that world whoſe applauſe ſhe had ſo ſedulouſly courted, what was there to bind lady Monteith to life? Surely I might now call in Arria's dagger, Portia's firebrand, or ſome more faſhionable quietus, with very good effect. But my heroine was a *mother*, and though man, poſſeſſed of firmer nerves and a colder heart, is often unjuſt to female merit, and falſely ſuppoſes that name to be ſynonimous with weak ſuſceptibility, maternal feelings have frequently inſpired ſuch long-ſuffering quiet fortitude as would add luſtre to the annals of a martyr.

Four innocent helpleſs creatures, who derived their exiſtence from her, taught Geraldine that ſhe had more to do than to lie down and die. In proportion to the hazard of their being deprived of paternal tenderneſs and protection, they poſſeſſed ſtronger claims upon their mother's heart, and urged her to exert every faculty to preſerve their morals, their fortune, and their happineſs. Hope revived with the determination of diſcharging theſe ſolemn duties, and whiſpered, that patience, gentleneſs, and undeviating rectitude of conduct, ſometimes produces a further reward, over and above the certain eulogy of approving conſcience. A reclaimed huſband *has* been reſtored to virtue by the mild allurements of a blameleſs wife; and a joyful mother *has* had the glory of leading back a repentant father to his abandoned children. "Be ſuch my lot!" ſaid the counteſs. "How poor is all other praiſe! "How contemptible every other purſuit!"

Theſe reſolutions, though formed in the ſecure privacy of a ſick chamber, might have re-

ſiſted

ſiſted common temptations; and lord Monteith, if left to his own natural character, would have evinced his penitence for his paſt faults by a more attentive tenderneſs; but Fitzoſborne knew too well the advantages of diſunion to permit the wounds which he had inflicted on the conjugal felicity of the Monteiths to be thoroughly healed. His influence over his lordſhip's mind was as unbounded as vigour, duplicity, and craft can acquire over a weak, open, unreflecting character. It had been interrupted by the ſtrong alarm which lady Monteith's danger excited; but as the returning health of the charming counteſs relieved all anxiety for her ſafety, her huſband grew weary of the trouble of thinking for himſelf, and, voluntarily ſurrendering the intellectual liberty of which he was ſo tenacious, permitted his falſe friend again, "with deviliſh art," to "reach the organs of his fancy.

The moſt accurate judges of human nature have obſerved, that we ſeldom forgive thoſe whom we have injured; and though the word *forgiveneſs* may be here miſplaced, it is certain that the pride of human nature, fond of juſtifying itſelf, always endeavours to find an excuſe for its own miſconduct in the behaviour of thoſe who are ſufferers from its faults. Almoſt perſuaded that his infidelity and extravagance had eſcaped diſcovery, lord Monteith wiſhed to ſilence the pain of ſelf-accuſation by excuſes better calculated to ſtifle remorſe than the poor apology which the more enormous guilt of others ſupplies.—While his imagination continued to unite the ideas of Geraldine and perfection, the behaviour of his grace the duke or the moſt noble marquis to their reſpective ladies afforded no extenuation of his own folly. But when his jaundiced eye began

began to think her mirth levity, and her gravity ſullenneſs, the load of his own guilt was at once removed. Though the opinion of the world ſtill preſcribes forbearance and decorum to the wife, it allows the huſband to recriminate, and a defect in temper on the part of the lady is a received excuſe for the vices of the gentleman:—a cruel and unjuſt concluſion, yet recommended by its univerſal prevalence to the moſt ſerious conſideration of the inſtructors of female youth.

Fitzoſborne increaſed all Monteith's extravagance by faint praiſe, affected ſilence, or ſtifled obſervations. But his chief attention was now directed to the counteſs. Her forced gaiety and frequent abſence of mind plainly told him, that the newſpaper paragraph had done its office, and he not unſucceſsfully endeavoured to communicate to her his knowledge of her ſituation, and his commiſeration for her ſufferings. Every inſtance of her lord's neglect or inattention was rendered more excruciating to Geraldine by Fitzoſborne's watching her countenance, or marking Monteith's behaviour by ſome ſlight ſign of diſpleaſure. In his converſations with her, he frequently introduced ſubjects which he knew muſt harrow up her ſoul. Reverting again to his favourite maxim, that "the conſcious mind is its own awful world," he commented on the preſent perverted ſtate of ſociety, in which merit generally mourns in ſilence, from the injuſtice or miſconception of others. The omnipotence of beauty, when united with its rare aſſociates ſenſibility and intelligence, was another favourite theme. He ridiculed the illiberality of annexing an idea of guilt to the allowable admiration of what is "perfect, fair,

"and

" and good." And he continually affirmed, that minds of a ſuperior ſtamp ought to ſhape their conduct by their own innate ſenſe of decorum, and not by the rules intended for more grovelling capacities. He condemned the indelicacy and want of taſte of many men of faſhion with warmth bordering on ſeverity, for deſerting the ſociety of women of refinement and information, and forming groſs attachments, in which intellect could have no ſhare. But the only remedy which he could deviſe for this evil was, he ſaid, to relax, inſtead of bracing, the ſeverity of our ſyſtem of divorce: and he frequently concluded with expatiating upon the folly of legiſlators, in not accommodating their inſtitutions to the varying humours of the people whom they meant to control. To ſome of theſe ſuggeſtions lady Monteith's mind gave an unqualified aſſent. She doubted the tendency of others; but they were ſo diſguiſed in the veil of ſuperior zeal for the improvement and happineſs of the world, and ſo ſweetened by the adroit mixture of oblique flattery, that ſhe ſeemed rather willing to blame the limited powers of her own underſtanding than to queſtion the infallibility of Fitzoſborne's all-ſapient mind. Sir William, who was ſometimes preſent at theſe orations, was at firſt extremely puzzled to know what the gentleman meant; but when he found that ſomething was wrong in that palladium of juſtice which he had ever been accuſtomed to venerate, the Britiſh Conſtitution, and heard the propoſed improvement, his full conviction of his own incapacity for ſupporting an argument could ſcarcely prevent him from telling the declaimer, that the remedy was worſe than the diſeaſe.

Fitzoſborne's

Fitzoſborne's contempt for the diſpoſition and abilities of ſir William betrayed him into an indiſcretion which his maſterly addreſs could ſcarcely repair. From his firſt arrival at Powerſcourt he had ſtudied the characters of the Evans's with jealous diſcrimination; and, as their talents and manners were alike undiſguiſed, he ſoon found, that they would prove moſt formidable opponents to his iniquitous deſigns. He was, therefore, peculiarly careful to conceal from them thoſe nefarious principles which he fancied he had ſufficiently enveloped to eſcape the confuſed apprehenſion of the good baronet. He was, however, completely miſtaken. Sir William's ruminations on Edward's aſſertions diſcovered conſequences which were at firſt unperceived; and, his uneaſineſs increaſing, he determined to diſcloſe it to his good friend the rector, with a hope of being reaſſured by his ſuperior learning.

At the concluſion of an unſucceſsful rubber at backgammon, by way of apology for bad play, he frankly owned, that he had been thinking of ſomething elſe all the time. "It is cer-
"tainly very wrong in me," ſaid he, "but I
"almoſt doubt of the truth of what Solomon
"tells us, that there is nothing new under the
"ſun." He then repeated Fitzoſborne's theory, and added, "Is it not a new way of puniſhing
"a man for uſing one wife ill, by giving him
"leave to marry another?"

Many years had elapſed ſince Mr. Evans's knowledge of the great world had been ſolely derived from the limited information of books and newſpapers. The daſhing ſpirits with whom he had been formerly acquainted ſought celebrity by high phaetons, Pomona green coats

coats, and Artois buckles; and ſeldom ventured upon more profound diſquiſitions than what were neceſſary to determine the height which the younger Veſtris could jump, or the diſtance that Eclipſe could gain on a dray-horſe in a courſe of five minutes. The elegant tutor was now changed into the rural divine, and, in common with all lovers of literature, he rejoiced to hear, that the frivolity of faſhionable manners was yielding to a ſpirit of deep reſearch and diſcriminating curioſity. Suppoſing that Philoſophy *ſtill* retained her character of being the handmaid of Truth, he felt inclined to pardon a few extravagancies in her admirers; and, believing the fountain pure, he repeated the popular couplet:

A little draught intoxicates the brain,
But drinking largely ſobers us again.

Neither the general philanthropy of Mr. Evans's character, nor the prepoſſeſſing impreſſions which lady Monteith's warm encomiums on Fitzoſborne had made upon his mind, could induce him to give a favourable interpretation to a propoſition that threatened to ſever the grand link which unites correct morals and ſocial happineſs. His candour could only point to one concluſion, which was, that the natural imbecillity of his revered patron's underſtanding increaſed with his years, and that the concluſion he had drawn from the arguments which Edward had uſed, was directly contrary to what the orator intended.

The anſwer which he returned to ſir William was of a temporizing kind. But, after revolving the converſation in his own mind, he determined

determined to apply to that confidant to whom, ſince deprived of a ſtill dearer friend, he had been accuſtomed to intruſt all his perplexities. He was concerned to find that Lucy's opinion of Mr. Fitzoſborne was not in uniſon with the ſentiments of the counteſs. She expreſſed her diſlike of the myſterious air which he generally affected; and obſerved, that Geraldine, who knew his diſpoſition thoroughly, apologized for the eccentricity of ſome of his ſentiments by urging his foreign education, and affirming that ſhe knew he poſſeſſed the beſt heart in the world. "Perhaps he does," continued Miſs Evans; "but people who wiſh well to any "cauſe ſeldom attempt to break down the bul-"warks that defend it." Her alarmed father eagerly inquired, if ſhe ſuſpected any thing deiſtical in his principles.

"Thank God," returned Lucy, "none of "my acquaintance are deiſts; therefore I do "not know in what manner they would act. "But ſurely, my dear ſir, when religious "truths are impreſſed deeply upon a cultivated "mind, they muſt give a tincture to our ordi-"nary converſation. Subjects which we "eſteem ſacred are not dragged into table-talk "controverſy; and the narratives of holy writ "are not degraded by being drawn into a lu-"dicrous parallel with the light events of the "paſſing moment. But I am willing to allow "that I may be more ſevere from being leſs "accuſtomed to the freedom of faſhionable "manners; for I obſerve my Geraldine, who "poſſeſſes the piety and the purity of an angel, "is not ſhocked at this ſpecies of levity."

"Does not Mr. Fitzoſborne appear to ſhow "a very marked admiration of the counteſs?" inquired Mr. Evans.

"Every

"Every body muſt admire her," returned Lucy, evading a direct reply: "I do not mean "merely on account of her perſonal charms, "though ſhe is now lovelier than ever, but for "her patient ſweetneſs and her dignified reſig-"nation."

"When you uſe the term reſignation, my "dear," interrupted Mr. Evans, "you ſhould "confine it to ſeverer trials than thoſe which "your enchanting friend has yet been called "upon to endure. Though we have often "lamented the capricious inattention of her "lord's behaviour, it is only one of thoſe leſſer "conflicts, by which Providence mercifully "prepares us for the more excruciating ſtrug-"gles that we muſt all ſuſtain before we are "liberated from this world. You know whoſe "ſentiments I now repeat. The harmonious "voice which once gave them utterance is "ſilent; yet the will of Heaven calls for cheer-"ful acquieſcence, and I obey."

Unwilling to depreſs her father at that moment, by repeating obſervations which might probably be merely the creatures of her own fancy, Miſs Evans dropped a tear to her mother's memory, and was ſilent.

CHAP. VII.

———Mark you this, Baſſanio;
The Devil can cite Scripture for his purpoſe:
An evil ſoul, producing holy witneſs,
Is like a villain with a ſmiling cheek;
O, what a goodly outſide falſehood hath!

SHAKSPEARE.

MR. EVANS was not one of thoſe ſupine paſtors who, contented with their own immediate ſecurity, forbear to warn their flock of the inſidious approaches of the wolf. His daughter's obſervations determined him to watch Fitzoſborne with ſcrupulous attention; and, if any thing ſhould happen to confirm his doubts, the hazard of being cenſured for impertinent interference would not deter him from ſtating to lady Monteith the danger of an intimacy with a man whoſe paſſions were not ſubjected by the reſtraints which religion impoſes.

Edward ſeemed rather to ſolicit than to ſhun this ſcrutiny. Some caſual expreſſions from Sir William, and the turn which Mr. Evans generally gave to the converſation, convinced him, that his zeal to make proſelytes had thrown him off his guard, and that in order to ſecure one convert he muſt allay the ſuſpicions which a deſire to gain many admirers had excited. He ſaw in Mr. Evans a man poſſeſſed of a ſincere, zealous, well-informed mind, occaſionally the dupe of its own excellence, ſomewhat haſty in its concluſions, and diſpoſed to receive a few ſtrong expreſſions as a fair definition of character:

racter: to which was added, a confidence in its own attainments, not unfrequent in an educated perſon long eſtranged from the invigorating colliſion of congenial ſociety. Edward adapted his behaviour to the rules which this diſcovery pointed out, and he ſeized the opportunity which Mr. Evans had given, by leading the converſation to the finiteneſs of human comprehenſion, to make what appeared like a candid diſcloſure of his ſentiments.

" I perceive ſir," ſaid he, " that you are anx-
" ious to diſcover my opinions; and inſtead of
" blaming, I highly admire the integrity of
" mind which ſuch curioſity evinces. I will
" own, that during my reſidence upon the
" Continent I was ſomewhat tinctured with
" the ſcepticiſm ſo prevalent there: and I will
" confeſs too, that the converſation of the
" higher circles in my own country, and above
" all the manners of many of the clergy, have
" not tended to remove my doubts. While the
" church appears to be more aſſiduous to de-
" fend its emoluments, than to promote the
" ſalvation of its members, no wonder if we
" reject its meagre doctrines. The character
" of the gentleman and the divine are not often
" ſeen in uniſon. If I had early poſſeſſed the
" opportunity of contemplating the happy mix-
" ture, religion would have appeared to me
" more attractive from the reflected beauty of
" its miniſters; but, inſtead of lamenting what
" is paſt, let me, by propitiating your candour,
" improve my preſent happy acquaintance."

" Religion," ſaid Mr. Evans, returning Fitz-oſborne's bow, " cannot really ſuffer by the miſ-
" conduct of its officials in the opinion of any
" well diſpoſed, conſiderate mind. Our at-

" tendance

" tendance at the altar does not remove us " from human temptations ; and with reſpect " to the fault to which you allude, a too great " pertinacity reſpecting our temporal rights, " candour will remember that our poſſeſſions " are not hereditary. Moſt of us have united " ourſelves to ſociety by the ſtrong ties of huſ- " band and father ; and the ſtudy of thoſe di- " vine precepts which were meant to enlarge " the ſocial affections may, by the infirmity of " human nature, which mixes error with our " ' faireſt aims,' ſometimes extend to a culpa- " ble ſolicitude for the fortunes of thoſe dear " connections, and abate the reliance which a " chriſtian ought to place in the direction and " ſupport of the friend of the friendleſs."

" I admit that your apology has weight," reſumed Fitzoſborne ; " but what will you ſay " of that avidity for field ſports and love of " diſſipation which ſo ſtrongly characteriſe the " divines of this age, and which you, ſir, con- " demn by your own example ?"

" I blame every particular inſtance," replied Mr. Evans, " without admitting the cenſure to " be determinate againſt the *whole* order. We " are marked by our habits from the reſt of " ſociety ; and the ' fox-hunting parſon,' or the " inſignificant ' Bob Jerome,' is pointed out to " ſatire, while the pale ſtudent, who conſumes " his health over the midnight lamp in the moſt " important reſearches, or the laborious in- " ſtructor of his village flock, are prevented " by their obſcurity from counterpoiſing the " weight of public odium by their uſeful un- " obtruſive virtues : but, granting the general " conduct of the clergy to be as bad as their " ſlanderers intimate, the ſervice to which we

" are conſecrated partakes not of our depra-
" vity."

" Perhaps not in minds endued with ſtrong
" powers of reflection," returned Fitzoſborne:
" but, as the chriſtian ſyſtem ſeems beſt adapt-
" ed for the lower orders of ſociety, it is much
" to be lamented, that any thing ſhould im-
" pede its progreſs where it has the beſt chance
" of ſucceſs. Perhaps the rules by which I
" would eſtimate the conduct of its miniſters
" are too ſtrict, and though, unhappily, my
" own principles have inclined to deiſm, I
" have candour enough to regret, that while
" law and phyſic are permitted to eſcape un-
" contaminated by the knavery of pettifoggers
" or the ignorance of empirics, divinity im-
" poſes perfection upon its ſtudents. But our
" converſation is likely to be interrupted. Per-
" mit me to ſay that I ſhall renew it with plea-
" ſure. I am a novice at compliment, and
" ſhall therefore only obſerve in my abrupt
" manner, that if the cauſe you ſupport were
" always as ably defended both in the pulpit
" and in ſociety, infidelity would be deprived
" of one of its moſt powerful weapons."

Every one has his weak ſide. Though the cup of undiſguiſed flattery would have been rejected with diſdain, yet when tempered by apparent moderation, and a wiſh for conviction, it became tolerably palatable. Mr. Evans, indeed, ſtill felt the propriety of hinting the dangerous tendency of Fitzoſborne's principles to lady Monteith; but he thought it juſt to qualify his cenſures with many expreſſions of reſpect for his character, and admiration of his abilities. " I grieve for his perverted talents," ſaid he; " and yet they encourage me to hope,

" that

" that the happy time will come, when they " will be inſtruments of reſtoring him to a " comfortable ſtate of mind. Many people " are driven into infidelity by the ſtings of a " burdened conſcience; but I ſhould *think* that " is not Mr. Fitzoſborne's excuſe for ſcepticiſm. " Yet the manners of the clergy can be no " more than an oſtenſible reaſon."

Geraldine was not in a diſpoſition to doubt Edward's virtues. Though ſhe had been that very morning the unhappy dupe of his cruel duplicity, her agonized ſoul clung to him as to the guardian angel who was to reſcue her out of an abyſs of ſorrow. She had diſcovered a letter from Mrs. Harley to her lord. It lay open upon his dreſſing-table, and the hated name was ſo conſpicuouſly placed as neceſſarily to attract her eye. She could not reſiſt her deſire to peruſe it, and the fatal contents ſoon convinced her, that the buſineſs which lord Monteith had hinted would ſoon recal him to London was nothing more than a wiſh to renew that degrading connection. The diſcovery ſeemed to be perfectly accidental. She perceived no preconcerted plan in the circumſtance of her having been ſent into the room by Fitzoſborne to fetch a volume of Rouſſeau, from which he had juſt miſquoted a well-known paſſage. She never conſidered that he had free acceſs to her lord's apartments; and ſhe could not know that he had not only purloined the letter from Monteith, but that he actually inſtigated him to the propoſed journey, by thoſe indirect means of oppoſition which he had found to be the moſt ſuitable way of governing a head-ſtrong impetuous character.

Fitzoſborne allowed her time to peruſe the letter, and then followed her to the dreſſing-room. She was leaning in a kind of ſtupor over a chair, her eyes fixed on the portrait of her lord which hung over the chimney, with a ſort of complaining ſweetneſs in their expreſſion which language could ill deſcribe. Edward addreſſed her with rhapſodical confuſion. He ſaid the letter was a miſtake. He aſſured her that Monteith's affections were ſtill unqueſtionably her's. He execrated his conduct, and then beſought her to be calm for her children's ſake. At that intereſting adjuration the reſtrained tears ſtole in ſilence down her cheek; and her tears again elevated Fitzoſborne's ſympathiſing tenderneſs to frenſy. He called her "dear lovely excellence!" He wiſhed ten thouſand plagues to overwhelm the narrow ſoul of the traitor who wanted diſcernment to be juſt to her merits; and he vowed that he could not look at ſuch a ſtriking imperſonification of ſuffering meekneſs without wiſhing to avenge her wrongs.

The counteſs anſwered in a faint tone: "My "wrongs require no avenger. My lord ſhould "be more careful of his correſpondence. Let "me entreat you to conceal the weakneſs into "which my curioſity has betrayed me."

"And is that the only proof I can give you "of my inviolable regard?"

"What other proofs can a wife receive, con-"ſiſtent with her ſolemn duties?"

"The ſtricteſt delicacy, the moſt rigid pru-"dence, would allow an adopted brother to "take a more active part. Remember too, it "is ſtill poſſible, that the ties of eſteem may "be ſanctioned by thoſe of kindred. Can I

"ſeek

" ſeek the recovery of lady Arabella's favour
" by worthier means than by trying to diſen-
" gage her brother from a criminal attach-
" ment ?"

" O ! name the means that may produce
" that bleſſed end," exclaimed the impaſſioned Geraldine, with claſped hands, and wild emphatic looks : " reſcue my Monteith from this
" dreadful thraldom ; reſtore to me his valua-
" ble but eſtranged heart, and I will pray for
" you, Fitzoſborne—I will entreat of Heaven,
" that all your future days may be as happy as
" thoſe I once enjoy'd."

Edward had no deſire to be included in Geraldine's prayers. He was equally averſe to hear of her attachment to her huſband, and of her dependance on Heaven. The advice he gave was of a ſatiric nature. It was, to charge her lord with his infidelity ; to humble him by her ſuperiority ; and to convince him by her eloquence. Vice, he affirmed, muſt ſhrink from the preſence of virtue. The ſunbeam of her eye muſt diſſipate the clouds by which Monteith's reaſon was enveloped. His recovered judgment would compare innocence, grace, and beauty, with proſtitution, vanity, and caprice ; and a repentant huſband, awakened by her reproofs to a ſenſe of honour, would at her feet abjure the infamous Harley, and all her flagitious ſiſterhood.

Lady Monteith's perturbed mind ſtill poſſeſſed ſufficient clearneſs to reſiſt the adoption of ſuch a dangerous expedient, which, by inflaming the violent paſſions of her lord, was more likely to make him caſt off all the decorum which a dread of diſcovery impoſed, than to check the career of his vicious indulgence ; and her deli-

cacy

cacy pointed out the imprudence of arming his pride in the cauſe of a courtezan, when ſhe hoped it might be made the happy inſtrument of releaſing him from a degrading connection. "I have," ſaid ſhe, "preſcribed to myſelf but "two rules for my conduct in this unfortunate "affair; and to theſe I will rigidly adhere. I "will never reproach lord Monteith, nor will I "ever divulge his indiſcretions. Even my Lucy, "the partner of my ſoul, does not know that "the dejection which ſhe muſt obſerve in me "proceeds from any other cauſe than latent "indiſpoſition."

"There are certainly many reaſons for "withholding ſuch confidence from Miſs "Evans; and when I conſider your father's "age and increaſing infirmities, I renounce a "plan which the reſpectability of his character "once ſuggeſted to me, of acquainting him "with his ſon-in-law's conduct, and urging "him to aſſume the tone highly becoming an "injured and affectionate parent."

"O! for Heaven's ſake! reject that idea," exclaimed the terrified counteſs. "Let not "the halcyon calm of his declining years be "clouded with a doubt of his child's happineſs. "How ungrateful, how impious ſhould I be, "to draw from repoſing age the pillow on "which it ſinks to reſt, cheered by approving "conſcience, and holding ſweet communion "with that peaceful world for which it has "been long preparing."

"And are you not afraid that his paternal "ſolicitude will pervade your pious conceal-"ment?" inquired Fitzoſborne. "I have ſeen "him watch your varying locks, and caſt glan-

"ces

" ces on lord Monteith ſtrongly indicative of
" ſuſpicion."

" You alarm me. Surely I had better leave
" Powerſcourt immediately, before thoſe ſuſ-
" picions ſhall be confirmed."

" That propoſal, madam, indicates your cuſ-
" tomary prudence, though it is hard at ſuch a
" time to deprive yourſelf of the comforts of
" his tender affection, and the ſoothings of
" Miſs Evans's friendſhip. Whither will you
" direct your penſive ſteps?"

" Not to that cruel world, Fitzoſborne,
" which has tarniſhed my reputation, and
" robbed me of my huſband's heart. I will go
" to Monteith, and embrace my dear little
" girls, from whom I have been ten months
" ſeparated. Their playful prattle will perhaps
" amuſe me; at leaſt their undiſcerning ſim-
" plicity will not impoſe upon me a painful
" reſtraint, in order to eſcape yet more inſup-
" portable obſervations; I ſhall be allowed the
" free indulgence of tears, and my mind may
" poſſibly recover ſtrength from ſolitude."

" And is this the lot of the nobleſt orna-
" ment of her age and country?" exclaimed
Edward." " O lady Monteith! are you ano-
" ther victim to the blind caprices of For-
" tune?"

" I was the carver of my own fortune, and
" muſt not complain of her caprices. I was
" juſt to the impulſe of an early attachment,
" and I have no one to condemn. Even at
" this inſtant complaint is ſilenced by pity.
" Lord Monteith cannot be happy. The re-
" collection of me muſt obtrude upon his guilty
" dalliance. The imprudent woman, by whom
" he is fatally entangled, can urge no claim to

" his

" his affections, to invalidate my prior right. " I am the mother of his children, the faithful " repoſitory of his ſecrets, the partner of his " ſorrows. I have ſoothed his anxieties, com- " poſed his ruffled temper, watched him in " ſickneſs.——O Fitzoſborne! words cannot " expreſs how much this agoniſing heart pre- " ferred his intereſt and his happineſs to my " own."

Edward graſped her unconſcious hand, and tremulouſly articulated, " Muſt corroding ſor- " row waſte the faireſt pattern of all that is " good and attractive? Surely, Monteith! " thou art the only man who could be unjuſt to " ſuch excellence."

" My good friend," ſaid the counteſs, rouſed to recollection by the ready tears which bathed her hands, " ſuppreſs this keen ſenſibility of " my ſorrows. You ſhall ſee that I will en- " dure them. For my children's ſake, for the " ſake of all who love me, I will endeavour to " exert myſelf: and to be amuſed, I will viſit " the good cottagers whom I once made happy; " I will retrace the groves I planted, and re- " ſume my accuſtomed occupations; though " every employment, every purſuit, even life " itſelf, is taſteleſs now."

Fitzoſborne dried his tears, and took a turn acroſs the room to recover the philoſophy which he proteſted had never before been ſo ſeverely tried. Could nothing be done, nothing be thought of, to reſtore the charming ſufferer to the peace which ſhe ſo highly merited? Again he addreſſed the trembling mourner, who, gazing on the portrait of her lord, ſeemed to apoſtrophize the beloved remembrance, and to implore not merely compaſſion but juſtice, inat-

tentive

tentive to the blandiſhments of her ſeducer, unconſcious of the impropriety of that confidence which her agitated ſoul beſtowed, and only ſuſceptible of the ſenſe of anguiſh, or the feeble hope of regaining an alienated heart.

" At length," ſaid Fitzoſborne, after two or three ineffectual endeavours to ſpeak, " I have " thought of two plans. They will, indeed, in- " clude a little oblique conduct; but the end is " too pure, too deſirable to render objectionable " the means of obtaining it. I know a young " nobleman who wiſhes to rival your lord in " Mrs. Harley's favour. He is rich and extra- " vagant, and I have ſome influence over his " mind. It is but ſpiriting him to outbid your " huſband, and the venal fair will ſoon forbid " the viſits of her leſs liberal keeper. Or, I " could feign a letter as from Mrs. Harley to " this gentleman, which would awaken Mon- " teith's jealouſy, and probably might have the " ſame effect of diſſolving the connection. You " ſtart, madam. Conſider that the infamy of " the woman is confirmed, and how forcible " are the claims which your innocent children " have upon your exertions!"

" I muſt not preſerve their innocence by the " forfeiture of my own. What right have I to " aggravate the guilt of an unhappy woman, or " to transfer to another family the calamity " which weighs me down? Nor can I yield to " ſully my integrity by baſely framing a forged " accuſation, or to taint my reputation by ex- " poſing it to the diſgrace of a diſhonourable " diſcovery."

" I lament when generoſity becomes roman- " tic, and I muſt beg permiſſion to urge my " ſchemes with what I think irreſiſtible argu-

" ments, if the faint hope which I have found-
" ed upon my influence over lord Monteith's
" mind ſhould fail me. Unfortunately, he is
" ſo bent upon going to town, that it will be
" uſeleſs to oppoſe his plan; but I will accom-
" pany him, and exert all my limited abilities
" to diſſolve this enchantment. No matter
" though I loſe his friendſhip; his vicious pur-
" ſuits have annihilated my eſteem, and I ſcorn
" to receive future favours from a man unjuſt
" to you."

" Ah!" thought Geraldine, " what can break
" the adamantine chain which links him to my
" heart! Should the hour ever arrive when af-
" fection ceaſes to throb, will not duty continue
" to urge its reſiſtleſs claims? But I cannot
" wonder, that a mind ſo refined as Fitzoſ-
" borne's ſhould call weakneſs vice, and diſdain
" communion with one who gives licence to
" thoſe rebel paſſions, which his firmer ſpirit
" holds in calm ſubjection. O, that Monteith
" poſſeſſed his virtues! But earth muſt not re-
" ſemble heaven."

" You pauſe, madam," ſaid Fitzoſborne, in-
terrupting her train of thought. " Am I ſtill ſo
" unfortunate as not to be able to ſuggeſt any
" thing deſerving of your approbation?"

" My excellent friend!" reſumed the Count-
eſs, " follow the dictates of your own good
" heart. Whatever ſcheme your knowledge of
" the world ſuggeſts, whatever diſſuaſive argu-
" ments your ſuperior talents direct you to uſe,
" exert them in my cauſe. But be careful to
" reſtrain your zeal to reſtore my ruined peace,
" leſt it ſhould urge you to purſue thoſe indirect
" paths which, even if ſucceſsful, my principles
" muſt conſtantly diſapprove."

" I

"I think," returned the ſophiſter, the code "of laws which you dignify by your obedience "permits the ſerpent to be blended with the dove. "Your innocence and your reputation cannot "be injured by actions in which you do not "participate; and if my conſcience juſtifies "my proceedings, what have you to oppoſe? Be "aſſured, that not even your intereſt would "prompt me to any ſtep which I did not *think* "highly warrantable; and here again I am "countenanced by thoſe doctrines which teach "me that the motive conſtitutes the act."

"Be ſure," ſaid the counteſs, "to examine "your motives with ſcrupulous care, leſt you "ſhould be deceived by a ſpecious good."

"My motives," ſaid Fitzoſborne, "have un- "dergone the deſired ſcrutiny, and I will abide "by the reſult of my inquiry. But I have two "favours to requeſt of you. Do not, while with "unremitting aſſiduity I ſtake all my hopes, "and brave every peril to reſtore to you the "happineſs you have loſt—do not, deareſt lady "Monteith! while I am far diſtant from you, "liſten to any uncharitable ſuggeſtions that "might tend to prejudice me in your eſteem. "Should any reflections be caſt upon me for "cheriſhing ſome peculiar notions, call to mind "that noble candour which teaches us, that "thoſe principles cannot be wrong which "prompt right actions. Permit me too the "honour of your correſpondence; and if ſuc- "ceſs ſhould crown my hopes, if my once va- "lued friend ſhould return to Monteith wor- "thy of you, allow me to partake your "tranſports; and let the cloud of ſorrow and "diſappointment which now obſcures my "youth, be brightened by the gladdering ray

of-

" of your ſociety. For it is only your unre-
" ſerved friendſhip that can *now* render life de-
" ſirable."

The counteſs promiſed the required favours with penetrating ſincerity. She confirmed the aſſurances of her permanent eſteem by giving him a miniature portrait of herſelf, which had been drawn with a view of being decorated with brilliants, and preſented to lady Arabella on her intended nuptials. Her opinion of Fitzoſborne's merits was wrought up to admiration; and the reſult of this interview convinced him, that he had gained all the ground in her affections which probability allowed him to expect. Her delicacy was no longer ſtartled by his paſſionate manner: the warm intereſt which he took in her cauſe no longer awakened the apprehenſion of unwarrantable deſigns. She had all the confidence in his integrity which he wiſhed to inſpire; and he relied upon her gratitude and her generoſity to divert every inference, and ſilence every ſuggeſtion, that might be urged to his diſfavour.

The moment, therefore, was unpropitious which Mr. Evans had choſen to alarm her fears, by ſtating his conviction, that the *ſingularity* of her friend's ſentiments were more nearly allied to deiſm than their apparent moderation and candour made her ſuſpect. I have already mentioned the motives which induced Mr. Evans to ſoften his intended cenſure; but Geraldine liſtened with impatience even to the extenuated accuſation. Not that ſhe thought the charge of deiſm a light reproach, or that her own conviction of the truth of revealed religion was enfeebled; on the contrary, her preſent dejected ſpirits more ſtrongly impelled her to draw

draw water from the refreshing fountain of eternal truth. But her prepossession in Edward's favour made her allow for a little clerical zeal for orthodoxy, which might, she thought, confound characters separated by many discriminating tenets: and, granting that Mr. Evans's suspicions even in their widest latitude were still well-founded, no danger could result from her intimacy with a person to whom he allowed the possession of so much talent and so much moral principle.

Her reply, therefore, to Mr. Evans's observations commenced with a popular sentiment, 'that the faith could not be wrong, when the 'life was right.' 'I am afraid,' said she, 'many people, who profess themselves warm 'advocates for the doctrines of our religion, 'would be unwilling to have the reality of 'their own belief ascertained by this simple 'and compendious maxim. We cannot judge 'of another person's heart but through the 'medium of his actions; and even calumny 'itself casts no censure on Mr. Fitzosborne. 'Let us not then condemn him on account of 'some *singularity* of opinion; for opinion, my 'dear sir, you know, is free. We can only be 'affected by the actions of others, not by their 'sentiments.'

"Beware, my dearest lady Monteith," re- "sumed Mr. Evans, "how you extend the "apologies which may be urged in behalf of "harmless singularity, to the vindication of "of those perilous doctrines which not only "corrupt the soil where they are suffered to "spring, but also threaten the general destruc- "tion of all that is dear and valuable to society. "Do the virtues of even the moral deist stand

upon

" upon any firm ground? Reaſon is his god;
" and he may to-day diſcover the footſteps of
" his deity in the paradoxes of Epicurus, and
" to-morrow in the fables of the Koran. The
" credulity of the infidel is proverbial, and his
" notions of right are as varying as his creed.
" He, my dear lady, is the corrupt tree from
" which, infallibility itſelf tells us, good fruit
" cannot ſpring. He is the polluted fountain
" whoſe waters muſt be bitter. As the mind
" thinks, the tongue ſpeaks, and the man acts.
" The battery which he erects againſt the rock of
" faith is built on ſand, liable to be undermined
" by every tide, and overthrown by every wind;
" yet with reſtleſs malevolence he perſiſts in
" his attack. Obſerve, madam, the ſyſtem ever
" purſued by ſceptics is *offenſive* warfare; the
" liberty of private judgment does not content
" them. Preſſing their peſtiferous doctrines at
" every opportunity, they deny us the freedom
" which they claim for themſelves, and never
" reſort to the plea of moderation, but when
" cloſely preſſed by arguments which they can-
" not otherwiſe avoid. But let them remem-
" ber, when either vanity or the deſire of mak-
" ing converts induces them to unſettle the
" minds of others, opinion then becomes acti-
" on, and they are as anſwerable at the audit
" of God and their country for the principles
" which they promulgate, as for the deeds they
" commit.

" Have you not rather exaggerated Mr.
" Fitzoſborne's errors?" ſaid the counteſs, in a more decided tone than ſhe was accuſtomed to uſe to her reverend inſtructor. " I have
" often heard him expatiate upon ſerious ſub-
" jects, but muſt own that I never diſcovered

" any

" any tendency to deiſm. If I thought him an
" infidel, it would give me the livelieſt con-
" cern; for, beſide the eſteem which his vir-
" tues inſpire in my mind, I owe him indeli-
" ble gratitude for many uncommon marks of
" friendſhip."

" I have repeated the very words he uſed,
" madam. Be you the judge. Why he ſhould
" affect reſerve to you, and chooſe to be un-
" neceſſarily explicit to me, is ſomewhat myſ-
" terious. What you tell me of this young
" gentleman, and what I have myſelf obſerved,
" ſtrongly awakens my compaſſion. He has
" deſired to renew the ſubject of our late con-
" verſation. I ſhall return to it with pleaſure,
" and eſteem myſelf happy if my efforts can
" direct his abilities to their priſtine intent,
" and reſtore to his boſom that tranquillity
" which he cannot now enjoy."

" You are always in character, my dear
" Mr. Evans, compaſſionate and benevolent
" even to thoſe whoſe conduct you diſapprove.
" I will endeavour to be a fellow-labourer in
" the ſame good work; and though my know-
" ledge is too limited to convince Mr. Fitz-
" oſborne's judgment, I may expedite the con-
" viction the deſires by pointing ſome perſua-
" ſive paſſages to his heart."

" Ever-amiable lady Monteith!" returned
" the good man with pious earneſtneſs, " be-
" ware how you enter the thorny paths of
" theological controverſy. I reſpect your ſex
" too much to wiſh them to hazard the mild
" luſtre of benignity with which the god of
" nature has adorned them, to purſue that
" uncongenial ſplendor which they can never
" obtain. Metaphyſical deductions, and philo-

" logical

" logical learning, by which we defend our " faith againſt its aſſailants, require a ſevere " courſe of ſtudy, and more intenſe thought " than your habits, or perhaps the peculiar " tendency of your intellectual powers, will " afford. You will be entrapped into conclu- " ſions which nothing but ſkill in the ſubtilties " of argument can elude; confuſed by objec- " tions oſtentatiouſly multiplied; the fallacy " of which the Ithuriel ſpear of biblical litera- " ture would inſtantly detect. By a dignified " ſilence, or an indication of diſpleaſure, con- " vince the bold diſputant who obtrudes his " crude notions of an inviſible God on your " ordinary converſation, that your reſpect is " too profound to enter lightly on the ſacred " theme, and your conviction too ſincere to " need the adventitious aid of a vanquiſhed " opponent. Theſe ſophiſts, my dear madam, " though they ſeek to embarraſs others, are " themſelves well acquainted with the torments " of doubt; and it is only by the converts " whom their falſe theory bewilders that they " are kept from renouncing it themſelves. It " is not to a zeal for truth, nor even to the " miſgivings of conſcience, that ſcepticiſm " owes moſt of its adherents, but to the pride " of human reaſon, and the love of ſingularity. " Permit them to diſplay theſe qualities, and " you grant them the triumph they deſire."

Geraldine allowed the general truth of theſe obſervations, but claimed an exemption in behalf of her friend. He was too placable and gentle to love diſpute, and too candid to repel conviction. Mr. Evans determined to inveſtigate the exiſtence of theſe qualities at their next converſation; but the opportunity of obſerving

ſerving them never occurred. Lord Monteith ſet off for London the following morning, and Fitzoſborne, by accompanying him, confirmed the counteſs in that lively ſenſe of eſteem and gratitude which ſhe thought ſhe could no way better expreſs than by exerting all her powers to impart to his character whatever in her judgment it ſtill wanted of perfection.

CHAP. VIII.

An elegant ſufficiency, content,
Retirement, rural quiet, friendſhip, books,
Eaſe and alternate labour, uſeful life,
Progreſſive virtue, and approving heaven;
Theſe are the matchleſs joys of virtuous love.
THOMSON.

LADY MONTEITH's fortitude was ſo ſeverely tried by her conſciouſneſs of the motives which occaſioned her lord's haſty departure for London, that ſhe found it neceſſary immediately to adopt Fitzoſborne's advice of returning to Scotland, leſt the ſorrows of her afflicted heart ſhould ſometimes diſdain the diſguiſe which filial piety induced her to aſſume. Her parting with her father was marked by circumſtances of peculiar tenderneſs. I ſhall not, however, draw from them any ominous predictions. Sir William's advanced age and increaſing infirmities on the one hand, and his lovely daughter's depreſſed ſpirits on the other, may account for this

this acute ſenſibility without aſcribing to either the powers of preſcience.

The evening previous to Geraldine's departure, her penſive mind was ſomewhat enlightened by a very agreeable converſation with Miſs Evans. "You know," ſaid that amiable girl, "I always had a caſt of the whimſical about "me; and probably if you had ſolicited my "company at Monteith, I might have raiſed "an invincible hoſt of objections; but ſince "you ſay nothing upon the ſubject, I am per-"verſe enough to determine to go back with "you to Scotland."

"My deareſt Lucy," ſaid the Counteſs, while her pale cheek kindled with the bluſh of pleaſure; "may you always be thus delight-"fully perverſe! Why I expreſſed leſs ſolici-"tude for your company partly proceeded from "the nature of my own proſpects, but prin-"cipally from what I ſuſpect to be yours."—"We ſpinſters," replied Miſs Evans, paſſing over her friend's alluſion to the ſtate of her own affairs with a ſtifled ſigh, "are ſeldom hand-"ſomely uſed by you married ladies, when "we chooſe you for our confidants. Yet, "though I am convinced that lord Monteith "will know all my ſecret the very firſt time "you write to him, I ſee the ſpirit of curioſity "ſo very ſtrongly imprinted upon your coun-"tenance, that I ſhall indulge you with a ſight "of two letters."

Perhaps ſome of my *female* readers may happen to have a little of their great-grand-mother Eve's failing about them, as well as my heroine; and to gratify it, though in a leſs degree, I ſhall inform them, that theſe important papers were a love-letter, with the reply: and that the author

author of the former compoſition was Henry Powerſcourt. An attentive obſervation of Miſs Evans's numerous excellencies had made him for ſome time her ſincere admirer; and, ſince not all the prudent delicacy of her character, nor the diffidence of his own, could entirely conceal from his obſervation the important ſecret of her preference, his high ſenſe of honour had long prompted him to a diſcovery of that reciprocal affection which her unaſſuming virtues had awakened in his heart. He was reſtrained by reflecting, that, as he had only that heart to beſtow, a declaration of his attachment might ſubject her to all the inconveniencies which are incident to a tender engagement, when pecuniary circumſtances prevent it from being cemented by the marriage-bond. His reſpected patron, with ſomewhat of the imbecillity of age, and ſomewhat of that tenacity of power which ſtrengthens our attachment to the poſſeſſions in which our tenure daily grows more precarious, had ſtill delayed confirming to him the independence which he intended to bequeath. He contented himſelf with liberally ſupplying his preſent wants; and as he was perſuaded, that the young man was very well as he was, and had no wiſh to alter his condition, he even brought himſelf to believe, that reſigning to him the Merionethſhire eſtate would be giving him a vaſt deal of trouble, which, as he ſeemed fonder of reading than of buſineſs, he would certainly be as well pleaſed to avoid.

Panting for independence, yet diſdaining to acquire it by any means which he thought irreconcileable with lady Monteith's intereſts, or with his deference and gratitude to her father,

Mr.

Mr. Powerſcourt repeatedly reſolved to purſue the deſired bleſſing by the ſlow, but pleaſant path of his own active exertions in ſome employment. Yet ſir William's love of his kinſman's ſociety increaſing with his infirmities furniſhed a thouſand objections to every profeſſion or engagement which was ſucceſſively propoſed. The baronet at length precluded all further application by aſking Henry, why he wanted to leave him? "Don't be uneaſy," ſaid he, "about your future proſpects. Depend upon it, I ſhall provide for you." Thus compelled to refer the ſecurity of his own happineſs to a diſtant and uncertain period, Mr. Powerſcourt ſubmitted with reſpectful ſilence to his benefactor's will. He contented himſelf with acquainting the amiable object of his affections with the peculiarity of his ſituation; and he hoped her penetration would conſider that as a ſufficient reaſon for preventing his tongue from avowing the preference which his manner ſtrongly expreſſed.

Though Henry's behaviour perfectly agrees with my ideas of honour, I am afraid ſome ſiſter of the quill, better verſed in the new code which has been introduced into the court of Cupid, will detect a thouſand groſs miſdemeanours, of which the above Henry Powerſcourt has been guilty. They may prove, according to the letter of theſe *recent* acts, that his behaviour to Miſs Evans ought to have been more rude, capricious, and inattentive, in proportion as he diſcovered her preference, and felt the increaſe of his own. Very likely the new method of argument may prove, that this would have been the moſt honourable way of proceeding.

I ſhall

I ſhall ſtill continue obſtinately diſpoſed to deny that it is the moſt natural.

Gifted with that intuitive knowledge which the votaries of the purblind god individually poſſeſs, Lucy read her lover's ſentiments in his eyes, and allowed the propriety of his conduct. Yet, when ſhe looked forward to the expected events of her future life, gratitude, eſteem, and veneration, generally excited a pious tear at the idea, that her own anxieties muſt not expect a final termination until the neighbourhood was deprived of the bleſſings it had long received from the unſparing benevolence of ſir William Powerſcourt.

Affairs were in this ſituation, when lady Monteith arrived from London. She had juſt opportunity to make a few agreeable diſcoveries, when the party were deprived of Mr. Powerſcourt's company. He was ſummoned to attend the ſick bed of his father, whoſe expectations, in reſpect to the marriage of his ſon, had been quite as unfavourable to Henry's deſigns, as the protracted bounty of ſir William. Young Powerſcourt being unqueſtionably the fineſt gentleman the good old yeoman had ever ſeen, there aroſe a neceſſity of his matching well; and as no lady in all the land could refuſe him, there was no reaſon why he ſhould take up with a parſon's daughter. Indeed old Mr. Powerſcourt had already ſelected his daughter-in-law; his bold ambition having directed him to no leſs a perſonage than madam Hetty ap Owen ap Thomas, his own landlady, and lady of the manor beſide. But as the juvenile attractions of youth, beauty, and ſweetneſs, were leſs viſible in the preferred fair, than the ſolid advantages of large property and high blood,

blood, the father was a more ardent admirer than the ſon: and, though the path of the latter was very much ſmoothed by the encomiums which the former beſtowed upon 'ſon Hal,' and an enumeration of what his couſin ſir William intended to do for him, which were repeated every time he went to pay his rent: nay, though miſs Hetty herſelf always diſtinguiſhed the bow of young Powerſcourt by a lower curteſy, as ſhe walked up the aiſle to her own pew on a Sunday, and even once honoured him ſo far as to aſk him to dine with her and the curate, Henry continued inviolably conſtant to his Lucy's

> Dimpled ſmile, and damaſk cheek,
> And eye of gloſſy blue.

He was relieved from a perſecution which was urged with ſuch well-meant but miſtaken earneſtneſs as at length made it painful, by the death of his father. His regret for that event was ſoftened by receiving a letter from ſir William a few days afterwards, incloſing the title deeds of the Merionethſhire eſtate, and containing an aſſurance, that ſince he wiſhed to marry, he ſhould have a houſe built for him within a mile or two of Powerſcourt manor.

As, in common with all Arcadian writers, I preſume the village ruſtic is too happily engaged with his flocks and his ſhepherdeſs to attend to the affairs of his neighbour; and being perſuaded that the love of news and the ſpirit of interference of which I have formerly ſeen ſome traces at Danbury are merely local diſeaſes; I ſuppoſe the acceſſion to Mr. Powerſcourt's fortune continued to be a profound

ſecret

ſecret in the pariſh where his father reſided: at leaſt I cannot conceive that any whiſper, which the taylor, or the ſchoolmaſter, or the barber, might circulate, could, through the medium of the curate, be diffuſed in the atmoſphere of miſs Hetty's beſt parlour; or that any one, by adding a unit to the rent-roll which ſir William had reſigned, could be the occaſion of the extraordinary and even oppreſſive civilities with which the diſtinguiſhed lady whom I have juſt named loaded Mr. Henry Powerſcourt. Her houſe was at his ſervice; her carriage was at his ſervice; her ſervants were at his ſervice; nay the world even ſaid, that ſhe more than hinted an offer of herſelf. This latter report I diſbelieve, becauſe it went ſomewhat further than what the proverbial hoſpitality of her country can account for. But if ſhe had any latent views, they ſoon received a complete mortification. Henry's firſt ſtep, after the arrival of the welcome gift, was to expreſs his gratitude to the donor; his next, to requeſt, that miſs Evans would render independence more valuable by ſharing it with him.

'And now, my Geraldine," ſaid Lucy to the counteſs, ſcarcely allowing her time to finiſh the letter which had introduced this long digreſſion, 'I call for your felicitations. Henry, 'you ſee, ingenuouſly avows the early attach-'ment which made you the firſt miſtreſs of his 'heart. I have not that extreme refinement 'which can only be content with a primary 'affection. It is ſufficient for me, that after 'long obſervation he owns a preference which 'he is too noble to affect, and too upright to 'withdraw. Secure in his honour and his 'virtue, not even your attractions will excite

'ſuſpicion;

'ſuſpicion; and though the tempered expec-
'tations of four-and-twenty abate much of the
'ſanguine enthuſiaſm of nineteen, neither ex-
'perience nor reflection teach me to doubt of
'the general happineſs of my future lot with
'ſuch a partner as my long-loved Henry.'

Lucy's head now reclined upon the ſhoulder of the counteſs, to conceal at once her bluſhes and her tears. "But," added the ſweet girl after a moment's pauſe, "you expreſs neither "ſurprize nor pleaſure at the wonders which I "am revealing."

The reader, who remembers the connubial ſorrows which clouded the counteſs's mind, will not wonder, that, though free from envy, her Lucy's brighter hopes occaſioned a painful compariſon; and we cannot be ſurpriſed at events which ourſelves have directed. It was natural for Miſs Evans to *wonder* why ſir William, who had ſo long delayed the promiſed gift, ſhould beſtow it juſt at that time; and why he, who had been generally hoſtile to marriage, and decidedly averſe to Henry's forming any engagement which threatened to deprive him of his ſociety, ſhould even ſuggeſt a plan for his immediate eſtabliſhment. But lady Monteith poſſeſſed the clue that could unravel the ſecrets of the labyrinth. Her obſervations on her couſin's manner had convinced her, that he was no longer inſenſible of her friend's worth, and ſhe aſſiduouſly employed all her intereſt with her father to expedite his intended donation, to the delay of which ſhe rightly attributed the prevention of a deſirable union. She had once intended to apply to the known munificence of her lord; but her illneſs, and the painful events which had followed and preceded it, prevented that deſign, and

interrupted

and interrupted her negociation with her father. She renewed it with increaſed earneſtneſs upon the death of the elder Mr. Powerſcourt; and at length, by the diſcovery of her Lucy's ſecret, won his cheerful acquieſcence. 'I never thought, my dear,' ſaid the good man, 'that 'thoſe young people had a liking for each other. 'I am ſure, if they had told me ſo, I ſhould 'have given my conſent immediately. Why 'did they keep me in the dark? My god-daughter is a very diſcreet girl; and you know I 'can fix them ſo near me that I may ſee Henry 'every day, which, as it is fitting you ſhould 'give up moſt of your time to your huſband and 'children, is, let me tell you, a great comfort 'to me. I always was afraid, that Henry would 'take it in his head to be in love with ſome of 'your London ladies, who would not like to 'play a game of cribbage to divert an old man 'now and then; and I thought Lucy never in-'tended to marry, not hearing of her having 'any lover, which for ſuch a pretty modeſt girl 'was rather extraordinary. Well, I muſt ſay, 'it is very odd that they ſhould happen to like 'each other, for things don't often happen as 'we wiſh they ſhould.'

Though ſir William's conſtitutional habits gave a ſlowneſs to his deliberations, nothing could be more rapid than his execution of any plan in which he knew the happineſs of a fellow-creature to be involved. He immediately ſent for his ſteward and his attorney. The writings were ſorted out, the deed of gift drawn up, the letter written, and the meſſenger diſpatched, before he could commit himſelf to his pillow with the hope of enjoying a comfortable reviſion of the proceedings of the paſt day. Lady Monteith

could ſcarcely reſtrain him from telling his little god-daughter, as he called her, after dinner, that he liked her choice very well, and that, if Geraldine had told him ſooner how ſhe had fixed her affections, ſhe ſhould not have been kept in ſuſpenſe. The counteſs was deſirous of enjoying the refined pleaſure of ſecretly diſpenſing good; and ſhe wiſhed, that an explicit avowal on the part of Henry ſhould precede the detection of Lucy's love.

The avowal was made in terms equally honorable to his own ingenuous integrity, and auſpicious to her future happineſs. And while a tear ſtole down Geraldine's cheek at her couſin's impreſſive recollection of the event which conſtrained him to ſubdue an attachment that 'grew with his growth' and entwined itſelf with all the ſtrong impreſſions that ardent youth receives, ſhe ſaw with pleaſure the ſucceeding paragraph point out the merits of his mature choice with clear diſcrimination, and generouſly prevent the confuſion of maiden delicacy, by carefully avoiding that apparent certainty of acceptance which his knowledge of the ſtate of her heart might have prompted him to aſſume.

Miſs Evans's reply announced the paternal ſanction which her lover had ſolicited, and ſhe added, with all the frank ſincerity of her character, a confeſſion of the eſteem and gratitude (I am almoſt afraid ſhe ſaid *tenderneſs* too) which his long-known worth had inſpired. The laws by which we veſtal-ſiſters were accuſtomed to conduct our affairs of courtſhip were much more auſtere and remorſeleſs, and better calculated to keep up the dignity of the ſex than thoſe which the preſent race of beauties adopt.

Then

Then love could live on ſlender bounties,
Then lovers gallop'd o'er two counties,
The ball's fair partner to behold,
And humbly hope ſhe caught no cold.

One year generally elapſed before the ſuitor could preſume to expect a direct reply; and it was not till after ſeven years punctual attendance, or the actual drawing up of the marriage ſettlements, that the lady's acknowledgment of reciprocal eſteem could be juſtified. Some huſbands, my cotemporaries, have declared, that the trepidations of doubt and anxiety ſcarcely ſubſided till thoſe of the modern couple generally begin; I mean, when the fair one promiſes at the altar to be her good man's unalienable property 'till death do them part.' But though I diſapprove of the renunciation of this decorous ſeverity in moſt inſtances, I am inclined to permit a little latitude when the lover acts with the integrity of a Henry Powerſcourt, and the lady poſſeſſes the unaffected prudence of a Lucy Evans. To terminate my diffuſe account of this correſpondence, Lucy repreſſed her lover's hopes of a ſpeedy union by ſtating her previous reſolution of ſpending the following autumn in Scotland.

"No, my love," ſaid the counteſs, whoſe attention appeared to be rouſed by the concluſion of her friend's epiſtle, "I will not allow you "to make ſuch a ſacrifice. Dearly as I prize "your ſociety, you ſhall be juſt to prior claims. "I ſhall not be wretched, I mean dull, without "you. I will ſit under my favourite beeches, "and meditate on that fair portrait of conjugal happineſs which you and your Henry

" will preſent. He has been long depreſſed " in his fortunes and croſſed in his hopes. How " ſhall I rejoice in the idea of his being at laſt " poſſeſſed of the independence that he ſo well " deſerves, and of the happineſs which his diſ- " paſſionate judgment beſt approves! You too, " my Lucy, rich in every domeſtic excellence! " my heart rejoices at the proſpect of your " virtues expanding in a larger ſphere; of " your fortitude and quiet heroiſm receiving " its merited reward. I will not be the means " of delaying this auſpicious union a ſingle " hour."

" But as my ſwain ſays nothing upon the " ſcore of an early day, or fond impatience, am " I to give him a hint that I expect ſuch flou- " riſhes? No indeed; I think I have been quite " frank enough already, and ſet him more at " eaſe than any lover (I mean except himſelf) " ought to be. His father's death is very re- " cent; and I know his ſenſe of propriety will " prevent him from propoſing marriage at pre- " ſent. Let me then, by ſhowing that I do " not expect it, convince him that I can imi- " tate the virtues I revere. What! but one " faint ſmile, Geraldine, at that declaration? " I expected to have heard ſome pretty alluſion " to Sir Charles Grandiſon, or to the 'Phœ- " nix, that ſole bird." Cannot you recollect " ſome little ſhade in Henry's character? his " purple coat, for inſtance, which diverted you " ſo much two years ago. But perhaps you " truſt to time to abate the romance of my ſen- " timents, or mentally quote the anſwer to " your own conundrum, 'why marriage is " like a microſcope?'—'becauſe it diſcovers " little blemiſhes.'

" It

" It is happy," ſaid the counteſs, " when " there are only little blemiſhes to diſcover. I " will no longer refuſe your ſociety, my dear " playful friend; but I accept it upon one con- " dition, that I may put a poſtſcript to your " letter to Henry."

" If you will promiſe to ſay nothing as com- " ing from me."

The counteſs gave her word to the contrary, and then added the following lines:

' I have conſented to take your dearer ſelf ' to Scotland, in hopes that the ſtrong attrac- ' tion will compel you to give us the additional ' pleaſure of your company. I would tell you ' how I rejoice at your propoſals to my Lucy, ' but words are ſo inadequate to my feelings ' that I muſt refer you to your knowledge of ' my character to eſtimate the ſincerity of my ' tranſports. May you be as happy as your ' mutual virtues deſerve, bleſſed with health, ' peace, and every worldly comfort! There *is* ' an event (O how my filial heart abjures the ' impending evil!) which will enable me to ' give my valued friend ſtronger marks of eſ- ' teem and gratitude than ineffectual wiſhes, by ' fulfilling a promiſe ever ſacred to

' GERALDINE MONTEITH.'

CHAP. IX.

——Is aught ſo fair
In all the dewy landſcapes of the ſpring,
In the bright eye of Heſper, or the morn,
In nature's faireſt forms, is aught ſo fair
As virtuous friendſhip?

AKENSIDE.

NO event happened immediately after my Heroine's return to Scotland that deſerves to be recorded. Though Miſs Evans's conviction that ſome concealed ſorrow preyed upon her amiable friend's mind, was the ſecret cauſe of her accompanying her, ſhe rightly judged that it was of a ſpecies which would receive no diminution from participation, and therefore forbore to intrude upon the ſanctity of woe. She contented herſelf with employing the ſtores of her well-cultivated mind, and the emanations of her ſportive fancy, to alleviate the dejection which admitted not of cure. Her anxious deſire to amuſe her penſive companion ſometimes made her cheerfulneſs more redundant than agreed with her natural character. But lady Monteith's perſuaſion, that the ſunſhine of her proſpects gave a more feſtal gaiety to her ſpirits, prevented her from perceiving that her Lucy's vivacity was more ſymptomatic of aſſiduous, anxious friendſhip, than expreſſive of the calm ſatisfaction of heartfelt happineſs.

The counteſs ſometimes drew a parallel between her friend's ſituation and her own, and her

her heart sunk at the chilling contraſt. How bright the radiance of love purified by eſteem! How mild the luſtre of equal minds, humble but not contracted fortunes, ſimilar taſtes, and moderate deſires! How blank were her own views! Not the uncontrolled poſſeſſion of an extenſive domain, not the pomp and ſuperiority of feudal greatneſs, cloud-capped mountains crowned with foreſts of pine, lakes beſtudded with verdant iſlands, and fringed with odoriferous ſhrubs, could now afford her any pleaſure. The ſpacious manſion, the numerous eſtabliſhment, ſeemed but mementos of their abſent Lord. Even the ſociety of her lovely children could not give the expected conſolation. They ſpoke and looked like their faithleſs father, and the tear of anguiſh mingled with the ſmile of maternal rapture.

The correſpondence of Fitzoſborne afforded no ſatisfactory intelligence. If one letter announced a plan which it was hoped might detach him from Mrs. Harley, the next epiſtle proclaimed its failure, and only detailed ſome mutilated converſations which implied a more total alienation of his lordſhip's affections than the writer thought it was prudent to communicate. Her tearful eyes fixed upon theſe particulars, and paſſed over with cold and vacant gaze the compliments which Edward addreſſed to her perſon, mind, and conduct. She ſcarcely obſerved even the ſympathy that he expreſſed for her ſufferings; and the advice he gave her to detach her affections from a man who he feared would never again return her tenderneſs, was rejected with a conviction that it was impracticable.

The

The frequency of lady Monteith's receiving letters in a male character very diſſimilar to her lord's, at length excited Miſs Evans's curioſity; and it even roſe to anxiety upon perceiving, that they were always reſerved for a private peruſal. Her attention, thus caſually fixed, was continually revived by ſome freſh myſtery which every poſt-day revealed. The counteſs ſeemed almoſt fretfully impatient till the mail arrived; and if any company were preſent at the ſounding of the horn, ſhe always made ſome excuſe to leave the room. More than once Lucy perceived her ſelect the letter of this favoured correſpondent, and retire to read it, while even her lord's lay unopened. Yet they appeared rather to increaſe her melancholy than to relieve it; and conſtantly, after having ſhut herſelf in her own apartment to anſwer them, her face bore unequivocal marks of having been bathed in tears.

Diſdaining to ſatisfy her doubts by indirect means, and unable to purſue any plan of raillery or playful artifice on what ſhe feared was a very ſerious ſubject, Lucy determined to give her friend an impreſſive hint of a very apparent impropriety; but unfortunately the interference of the Evans's was always ſo ill-timed as rather to aſſiſt than to fruſtrate Fitzoſborne's diabolical views. In reply to a letter in which the counteſs, like the artleſs placable Deſdemona, had profeſſed that it was impoſſible for her affections ever to change their object, Edward announced the welcome tidings of her lord's ſpeedy return. The merit of this reformation was, however, wholly owing to his friendly monitor's contrivance. He had cut out that part of Geraldine's letter which contained thoſe affecting expreſſions

of

of inviolable attachment, and pretending, that it was addreſſed to one of her London correſpondents, with whom he was intimate, he had ſhewn it to lord Monteith, and ſo ſtrongly worked up his feelings of compunction and ſhame, that a rupture with Mrs. Harley was the conſequence. Fitzoſborne regretted, that he was not likely to witneſs the reconciliation which he had ſo anxiouſly laboured to promote; but the Miniſter had juſt given an abſolute promiſe in his favour, and his long experience of courtly forgetfulneſs convinced him of the poſitive neceſſity of reviving recollection by conſtant attendance. He however added, that if his friend ſhould not be in a deſirable ſtate of mind when he left London, he would renounce all his hopes of an eſtabliſhment rather than riſk the ſtability of recent reſolutions by leaving him, during his long journey, to the ſuggeſtions of his wayward fancy.

An exclamation, or rather ſhriek of ſurprize and tranſport, which followed the peruſal of this letter, drew Miſs Evans into the counteſs's chamber. She found her friend ſunk upon her knees, her hands and eyes lifted up as in a ſtrong tranſport of devotion, while the paleneſs of her countenance indicated immediate danger of fainting. Lucy flew to aſſiſt her. 'No,' ſaid lady Monteith, gently rejecting the proffered ſalts, 'I am not ill.—A ſudden ſurpriſe has 'overwhelmed me—leave me to myſelf a little '—I ſhall ſoon be compoſed.' Miſs Evans ſilently withdrew.

Contrary to the uſual hoſpitality of Monteith caſtle, the friends ſat down *tête-à-tête* to dinner. The noble hoſteſs was recovered from her firſt emotion; but her manner indicated that ſome

important event demanded all her thoughts, which reluctantly ſubmitted to pay a ſcanty attention to paſſing objects. The ſervants were no ſooner withdrawn, than unable any longer to reſtrain her full-fraught heart, ſhe told her friend that they ſhould ſoon have a welcome addition to their party in the company of lord Monteith, and perhaps Mr. Fitzoſborne alſo.

'I ſincerely rejoice in my lord's return,' ſaid Miſs Evans; 'but I thought his friend was fully 'occupied either in attending the Miniſter's le-'vee, or in diſcharging the duties of the office 'which you told me his lordſhip's intereſt would 'procure him.'

'He will ſacrifice every thing to the deſire of 'proving his ſincere attachment to me,' ſaid lady Monteith, too much engroſſed by the lively paſſion of gratitude to attend to the caution which ſhe had hitherto uſed upon the ſubject of her correſpondence with Edward.

Alarmed at theſe expreſſions, Miſs Evans perſevered in a curioſity which ſhe would have reprobated upon any other occaſion; and Geraldine, drawn by her interrogatories to be more explicit than ſhe at firſt deſigned, at length conſided the whole ſtory of her latent ſorrows. She ſpoke the preſent feelings of her heart; and though ſhe ſuppoſed it ſtill attuned to gentle complacency and forgiving ſweetneſs, diſtreſs had for ſome time prevented her from engaging in her cuſtomary duty of ſelf-examination; and the indignant ſenſations of ſlighted beauty, and offended deſert, gave an air of reſentment to her narrative of her huſband's perfidy, which the limited merit of his reluctant return and irreſolute repentance could not ſubdue. She haſtened from this painful ſubject to the more pleaſing theme of Fitzoſborne's diſcernment,

zeal,

zeal, and fidelity; his refined delicacy, correct judgment, and all the capacious powers of his exalted ſoul.

'Poſſibly he may mean well,' obſerved Miſs Evans, after having, with marked attention, twice read Fitzoſborne's letter. Surpriſed at a ſuggeſtion which ſeemed deficient of her uſual candour, lady Monteith replied, that the integrity could not be doubtful which ſpoke by the moſt noble actions. 'What,' ſaid ſhe, 'but 'diſintereſted virtue could thus direct his unwea-'ried aſſiduity to attempt the reſtoration of my 'domeſtic happineſs?'

"There is a myſtery in this buſineſs," continued Lucy, "which I cannot penetrate. It is to "me aſtoniſhing, that lord Monteith, after hav-"ing been ſeveral years your happy huſband, "ſhould, unſolicited and ſelf-ſeduced, abandon "you for a woman, whoſe weak pretenſions to "his notice muſt ariſe from ſome faint tranſcript "of that intelligent beauty which animates your "countenance, or ſome contemptible imitation "of the playful wit which irradiates your con-"verſation."

"My dear ſecluded friend," replied the counteſs, "knows nothing of the corrupt manners of "the world; of the eclat which general opinion "attaches to novelty, or of the celebrity which is "oftener ſhared by eccentricity and a bold defi-"ance of decorum, than awarded to real de-"ſert."

"True," ſaid Lucy; "happily both for my "temper and my heart, I am ignorant of the "manners you deſcribe. But how could lord "Monteith ſee this Mrs. Harley? A woman "of her deſcription muſt be a ſtranger to the "parties he would frequent; I mean, while he

"continued

" continued unſeduced by the allurements of " vice."

Lady Monteith obſerved, that though women of character never viſited courtezans; yet unleſs they were very low, or very audacious, the latter always appeared in public places; and if a certain degree of faſhion was annexed to them, either on account of their own wit and elegance, or for the rank or talents of their admirers, gentlemen felt themſelves not diſgraced by being ſeen in their parties. It was, therefore, very poſſible for her lord to ſee Mrs. Harley ſufficiently to be allured by her perſon and converſation, without his frequenting any ſcenes unbecoming his rank or injurious to his reputation.

Lucy ſighed at the relaxed manners which ſeemed to uſher in the triumphs of relaxed principles. But her ſuſpicions of ſome nefarious proceedings on the part of Fitzoſborne were not yet entirely removed. " I muſt not then," ſaid ſhe, " ſuppoſe my lord quite changed; but ſtill " I know you are the ſame. Your feeling heart " will not allow you to eſtimate the degree of re- " gard which you ſhould bear to the huſband of " your youth and the father of your children by " the cold plea of deſert. Your forgiveneſs " would outſtep his ſolicitations; and every " time you ſpoke or wrote to him, the ſentiments " of your full-fraught heart would give a digni- " fied tenderneſs to your expreſſions, remote " from reproach, and better calculated to awaken " compunction. How came it, my love, that " this ſuffering gentleneſs, exerted at Powerſ- " court, or the affectionate letters that you have " written to him ſince you have been here, have " had no effect; but that the mighty good ſhould " at length be accompliſhed by the ſkilful contri-

" vance

"vance and artful interpoſition of Mr. Fitzoſ-
"borne? Has he a greater influence over your
"huſband than you could acquire? You, who
"are ſo much intereſted to exert the reſiſtleſs
"power of your many invincible charms! How
"diſſimilar muſt lord Monteith's character be
"from what it appears!"

Geraldine pleaded, that the people are differ-ently diſpoſed at different times; and that ſimilar actions and ſentiments frequently fail of producing correſpondent effects; and ſhe accounted for the inefficacy of her pen by owning, that ſhe had only written ſhort and in ſome ſort formal letters to her lord ſince her return to Scotland. "No "longer able," ſaid ſhe, "to pour forth my "whole heart, I was glad of ſome extraneous "ſubject which would occupy the vacant page."

"And how did you then hope to reclaim "him?" inquired Lucy. "I ſhould think that "if he perceived any coldneſs in your manner he "would turn that diſcovery into an apology for "his behaviour."

"I could not help the conſtruction he might "put upon my letters. Sorrow cannot be diſ-"fuſe, unleſs where it may unboſom its woes."

"Did you not write at large to Mr. Fitzoſ-"borne?

"I did. He knew my ſecret, and in his in-"terpoſition was my only hope."

"Do women of faſhion, my Geraldine, coun-"tenance one another in the cuſtom of having "male confidants as well as male attendants?"

"There is a little pique," thought the counteſs in that obſervation; "but friendſhip warm "as my Lucy's is very ſuſceptible, and I will not "reſent her well-meant acrimony."

"Be

" Be assured," said she, clasping Miss Evans's hand with a smile of tender sweetness, " that ac-
" cident alone gave him possession of what pru-
" dence taught me to conceal from you." She then related the principal particulars of what passed in lord Monteith's dressing-room at Powerscourt: but though all her communications were intended to place Fitzosborne in a fairer point of view, the suspicious Lucy only discovered increasing mystery, if not absolute duplicity.

" It is plain," said she, in reply to lady Monteith's narrative, " that Fitzosborne *early* knew
" of your lord's inconstancy. It is plain too,
" that he has all along been assured that he pos-
" sesses a considerable influence over his mind.
" Your admirable conduct, my Geraldine, has
" convinced the world, that, though your hus-
" band's passions are hasty and impetuous, they
" may be directed by gentle management. Is it
" not wonderful then, that all Mr. Fitzosborne's
" boasted penetration, judgment, and self-com-
" mand, should not have struck at the root of
" this fatal connection before it was confirmed
" by habit; or that it should continue so long,
" after he had set all his acknowledged abilities to
" work for its annihilation, when he had him to
" himself too, with uninterrupted power to act
" as he thought most expedient?"

" But he has succeeded at last," observed the countess, rather fretted than convinced by the evident drift of her friend's conversation.

" He has: but how? By means incompatible
" with the frank ingenuousness of your character,
" and which must either subject you to the ap-
" prehension of your lord's discovery of a preme-
" ditated fraud, or force you to confess that, de-
" spairing

" ſpairing of your own influence, you have ap-
" plied to a knight-errant for aſſiſtance. Only
" conſider too, how inadequate are the means, if
" the victory were indeed ſo difficult. Did lord
" Monteith doubt your affection, your conſtancy,
" your forgiveneſs? Who inſpired thoſe doubts?
" Or how came it, that your champion's elo-
" quence could not diſpel them? But I perceive
" I diſtreſs you, my Geraldine. Pity, love, and
" admiration for you, are the predominant feel-
" ings of my ſoul, which exults in your bright-
" ening proſpects. See, for once I tranſgreſs
" againſt my uſual abſtemiouſneſs: this glaſs of
" Champagne is, to the ſpeedy and happy return
" of the agreeable lord Monteith. You pledge me,
" I know, in that ſentiment. I have not, how-
" ever, quite finiſhed it. Obſerve what follows:
" —But no Fitzoſborne with him."

The counteſs, ſmiling, wiped a ſtarting tear. " I perceive," thought ſhe, " whence Lucy's pre-
" judices againſt this amiable man ariſe. Her
" father ſuſpects him of infidelity. It is a pity,
" indeed, that he does not add the luſtre of piety
" to his acknowledged virtues; but it is more un-
" fortunate, when religion gives its champions a
" tincture of bigotry and cenſoriouſneſs." Her children, entering the room at that moment, made the images of Fitzoſborne and his opponents yield to the tender recollection of their returning father.

That much deſired event ſpeedily took place, and received an additional recommendation from its happening ſooner than even lady Monteith's calculations judged to be poſſible. Her lord met her with a glow of tenderneſs, which quickly made her trembling agitation yield to the moſt delightful compoſure, while Lucy's ſympathetic

boſom

boſom ſwelled with grateful rapture. She turned her head aſide to utter a prayer for the continuance of this renewed affection, and perceived that *all* her wiſhes were not fulfilled. Fitzoſborne was of the party. He made her a moſt profound bow. An abrupt curteſy was her return, as ſhe glided by him to her own apartment.

"It is but ſuſpicion," ſaid ſhe to herſelf, ſtriving to calm her agitated thoughts; "and I am "certainly very wrong in acting upon it as if it "were certainty. I think I ſee invidious guile in "every feature of his countenance. Yet ſuppo- "ſing my conjecture right, is it prudent for me "to put him upon his guard, by ſhowing him "that I diſlike him? I ſhall be better able to "warn my friend of his depravity, by at leaſt ap- "pearing to receive that impreſſion which he "chooſes to give me of his character."

Miſs Evans's natural ſincerity, and the ardour of her attachment to the counteſs, prevented her from purſuing the line of conduct which ſhe had preſcribed. As her ſtrong ſenſe and extenſive reading enabled her eaſily to detect the fallacious ſophiſms which Fitzoſborne eaſily paſſed upon his more partial or leſs diſcerning auditors; ſo her frank ingenuouſneſs, undiſguiſed by the habits of poliſhed life, heightened by her early imprinted reverence for ſacred truths, and her anxious apprehenſions for the ſecurity of her beloved Geraldine, againſt whom ſhe ſaw that the infernal artillery was chiefly directed, ſcarcely allowed her to confine her indignation within the bounds which her unaffected propriety of manners would otherwiſe have obſerved. But violence generally defeats its own intentions. The horror ſhe conceived againſt Fitzoſborne's ſuppoſed deſigns induced her to view his every word and action with ſuſpicion: and

her

her eagerneſs to convict him not unfrequently produced a falſe accuſation, of which lady Monteith's anxiety to clear the wounded honour of her friend conſtantly took advantage.

The reſult, therefore, of this vigilant ſcrutiny was not what Lucy hoped it would be. Geraldine, inſtead of being convinced that ſhe harboured a boſom-traitor, ſaw in the friend of her early youth another inſtance of the uſual effects of a ſecluded way of life, pertinacity of opinion and auſterity of manners.

The reconciliation of the earl and his counteſs, though apparently cordial, was not attended with that tranquil confidence which preceded the diſaſtrous period of his lordſhip's enormities. He ſeemed to feel degraded by the virtues of his wife. He diſcovered reproach in her obſervations, and ſeverity in her conduct. No longer able to flatter himſelf with the hopes that his faults were not trumpeted to the winds, he ſometimes conſtrued her behaviour into contempt and indifference; and though the exquiſite anguiſh which that idea cauſed might have told him that a tranſient infatuation cannot diſplace rooted regard, he always fancied that he could retort ſcorn with ſcorn; and as his deciſions and actions followed each other with rapid pace, he ſoon determined to relinquiſh that tenderneſs of manner which compunction had impoſed on his firſt return, and which, he thought, had too much the air of ſelf-accuſation to ſuit the dignity of a huſband's character. She, on the other hand, though aſſured by Fitzoſborne that the breach with Mrs. Harley was irreconcileable, could not repreſs her fears, leſt a heart which once had wondered might be again inthralled. It was plain that Fitzoſborne had the ſame apprehenſion. His viſit to Monteith proved,

that,

that, to uſe his own words, " his friend was not " in ſuch a deſirable ſtate of mind as to permit his " dependance upon the ſtability of recent reſolu- " tions." Thus aggravated, Geraldine's dread of eſtranging her huſband by her behaviour, or giving him an excuſe for future infidelity, far exceeded the bounds which affection alone would have preſcribed; and her manner had an air of reſtraint which the increaſing gloom of her lord's did not relieve.

Beſide the accuſations of conſcience, Monteith's ſoul ſtruggled with other ſorrows. His initiation into the myſteries of the gaming-houſes had been attended by ſevere loſſes; and while the extravagance of a mercenary courtezan had been ſupplied with the ſums appropriated to his tradeſmen, he had ſatisfied his debts of honour by granting annuities upon his eſtate to that ſet of harpies who glory in the wealth which they have acquired by adminiſtering to the vices of mankind. For the firſt time ſince his marriage, the earl was informed by his ſteward, that the yearly expenditure would greatly exceed his rent-roll. Impatient of enduring the blame of any fault which he could transfer to another, he determined to place this defalcation to the ſums which lady Monteith had expended in the improvement of the adjacent country, and in ſome freſh erections at James-town, with which ſhe had amuſed herſelf during his abſence. He read her a long lecture of œconomy; reprobated her turn for expenſive alterations; and affirmed, that it would be the means of compelling him to leave the ſeat of his anceſtors. Theſe reproofs were new, ill-diſguiſed by the pretence of providing for his ſon's education, and ill-timed: for, relying upon his wonted liberality, Geraldine had not only endea-

voured

voured to occupy her mind by ſome expenſive erections in the park, but had alſo ſet on foot ſome new charitable inſtitutions which her benevolent heart could not abandon without feeling the moſt lively regret. Forgetting, or perhaps wanting fortitude to uſe the guiding clue by which ſhe had formerly been accuſtomed to influence his opinions, ſhe attempted to remonſtrate, but was ſoon ſilenced by a reply which her enfeebled ſpirits could not ſupport. She retired in tears.

The reader will not believe that Fitzoſborne had been ſincere in his wiſhes of effecting an entire reconciliation. It anſwered his purpoſe to bring the earl back, freed from his connexion with Mrs. Harley; he had performed that undertaking, and taught the counteſs that ſhe owed him an indelible debt of gratitude. He now generally left his lordſhip to that miſery which muſt be the natural effect of a perturbed conſcience and perplexed circumſtances upon a mind which wanted wiſdom to plan and fortitude to perſevere in a ſyſtem of œconomical retrenchment, or to efface error by ſincere repentance. He ſaw with pleaſure the gay, careleſs, generous earl of Monteith, become gloomy, abſent, moroſe, and penurious. He ſaw too, that the bottle was conſtantly applied to, not, as formerly, to be an auxiliary to mirth, but as an opiate to ſilence care. Affection could no longer bind the heart of Geraldine to ſuch a partner. Continual provocation muſt weaken the claims of duty; and there needed nothing more than that himſelf ſhould exhibit the full effect of contraſt, by a diſplay of the virtues moſt oppoſite to Monteith's vices, and to proceed in his deſign of enfeebling the power of religious principles, to render the unſuſ-

unſuſpecting counteſs his eaſy prey. Her oppoſition to what ſhe thought the extreme rigidity of ſome of Miſs Evans's opinions, and her tacit acquieſcence to ſeveral of his tenets, convinced him, that he had made a conſiderable progreſs. He continued ſilent upon the ſubject of her lord's conduct. An air of pity and reſpect, mingled with the uniform attention of his manner, ſpoke a language far plainer than words.

CHAP. X.

I hate when Vice can bolt her arguments,
And Virtue has no tongue to check her pride.
MILTON.

I HAVE already obſerved, that miſs Evans's impetuoſity was of diſſervice to the noble cauſe which ſhe conſcientiouſly eſpouſed; and Fitzoſborne, certain that her zeal would defeat her intentions, paſſed her in ſilence, as an enemy whom he could only render formidable by appearing to fear. But the cauſe of principle was now defended by the arrival of another champion. Mr. Powerſcourt availed himſelf of the counteſs's invitation to chide his Lucy for a tyrannical exerciſe of female prerogative, in compelling him to take a journey of two hundred miles to whiſper a love-tale which might have been more agreeably told in a little woodbine bower which ſhe had erected, in ſtrict conformity to the rules preſcribed by her favourite poet Maſon, in the parſonage garden at Powerſcourt. Henry had named it after the Nerina of that elegant bard,

and

and decorated it with the following inſcription and motto:

I only begg'd a little woodbine bower;
Nerina's bower, where I might ſit and weep.
MASON'S ENGLISH GARDEN.

Wind, fragrant woodbine! round Nerina's bower:
Clematis, deepen the umbrageous ſhade;
And, mingling with the jas'mine's penſile flower,
Fulfil the wiſhes of the mourning maid.

Here oft, when evening ſinks in ſoft repoſe,
Shall Maſon's numbers wake the ſlumbering grove;
Here, gentle Lucy ſhall recite the woes
Of orphan beauty and unhappy love.

As taſteful ſympathy enjoys the theme,
Fancy, the local landſcape ſhall extend;
Bid Grecian fanes in dim perſpective beam,
And Gothic arches mid the pine-trees bend.

Ye ſportive fays, ye fine etherial forms,
Nymphs of the ſun-beam, ſylphids of the breeze;
Defend their foliage from untimely ſtorms,
From blaſting mildew ſave theſe votive trees.

Here, on this verdant turf, the tuneful queen
With attic grace her deathleſs ſong renews;
And native virtues conſecrate the ſcene,
Sacred to Lucy's taſte, and Maſon's muſe.

The chidings of a ſincere lover are rarely formidable; and Miſs Evans had an excuſe to plead, which would have diſarmed a fiercer reſentment than ever glowed upon any occaſion in Henry's breaſt. In the ſame moment he forgave her flight, applauded her motives, and promiſed to aſſiſt

aſſiſt her deſigns. "I knew Fitzoſborne while "I was in Italy," ſaid he; "our acquaintance "was but ſlight, yet I diſcovered enough to be "convinced that he muſt be a dangerous inmate "in any family."

But though Powerſcourt poſſeſſed ſufficient penetration to read the character of a maſked villain, Edward's profound diſcernment had for once led him to form an erroneous concluſion. The ſociety in which he had met Henry was compoſed of perſons whom the latter deſpiſed for their folly, or deteſted for their impiety; and convinced, that even the argumentative powers of the unrivalled Crichton would be in vain exerted againſt wilful error, he determined, by not treating them with a diſpute, to ſuffer them to enjoy their fading poppy-garlands uncontеſted. Fitzoſborne had concluded, that the reaſon of his countryman's ſilence was his having nothing to ſay; and he hailed the arrival of an antagoniſt at Monteith, whoſe ſpeedy defeat would add to the already-exalted reputation which his ſcientific abilities had acquired among the rural eſquires, feudal lairds, and officers in quarters, who frequented the earl of Monteith's table.

When Geraldine acquainted her friend with her couſin's expected arrival, his ſtile of commendation expreſſed his idea of his character. "O, Harry Powerſcourt! I was acquainted "with him abroad. A very honeſt, downright "ſoul, with true Engliſh notions; he ſeemed "always afraid of mixing with ſtrangers. I "ſhall be very happy to ſee him again, for I en-"joyed his ſincerity."

"He is an exception then to the general ob-"ſervation; for he is moſt honoured by thoſe "who beſt know him," ſaid the counteſs. "*We*

"eſteem

" eſteem him a good ſcholar, and a very ſenſible
" intelligent companion."

" A great deal, my dear madam, depends up-
" on our confining ourſelves to the ſtrict defini-
" tion of words, or elſe our intentions are am-
" biguous. I perceive that by my neglect of
" this rule, you have miſtaken mine. Mr.
" Powerſcourt has indiſputably a very good *plain*
" underſtanding, and I dare ſay he is an excel-
" lent claſſical ſcholar. But pardon me if I ſay
" he has never ſtepped out of the beaten track,
" nor attended to what I ſhould call the concate-
" nation of deductions, or conſecutive effect of
" given poſtulates; and from this want of ar-
" rangement in his mental faculties, it follows,
" of courſe, that he takes things as they are,
" without examining from what cauſes the di-
" ſeaſes in the moral and natural world originate,
" or how they may be remedied."

The counteſs underſtood as much of this ſpeech as the ſpeaker intended ſhe ſhould; and ſhe could only lament her early inattention to logical ſtudies, which might have convinced her, as they had done Fitzoſborne, that creation wanted to be new-modelled; and that the preſent age had more wiſdom than all the preceding ones taken collectively.

The intended combatants now ſtood, like Homer's heroes, " panting for the fight," and impatient for the ſignal of engagement. Though the deſire of victory alone would not have induced Powerſcourt " to unlock his lips in ſuch un-
" hallowed air," the preſervation of Geraldine from the ſnares of a ſeducer inſpired him with a zeal warm even as that which Lucy Evans poſſeſſed. But being tempered by ſuperior judgment, he determined to appear, as if he rather

adopted

adopted an opinion from his obſervation of Fitzoſborne's behaviour, than came with a predetermined reſolution of diſliking what he was expected to admire.

Aware that it is much eaſier to aſſail the opinions of others, than to bring forward a well-digeſted ſyſtem of your own, Fitzoſborne determined to commence the attack. An opportunity ſoon offered for him to point ſome of thoſe contemptible but blaſphemous ſarcaſms which paſs for wit, againſt the Old Teſtament, which infidelity is now pleaſed to term an indefenſible outwork of the popular theology. A ſcandalous tale of a married nobleman had found its way into a public paper; Fitzoſborne pointed it out to Monteith by a ſignificant glance, while he, with the pleaſure common to offenders on diſcovering a companion in guilt, honoured the wretched jeſt with which the paragraph concluded with a hearty laugh.

"What has entertained you, my lord," inquired the counteſs. "May we not partake of "your mirth?" Monteith haſtily replied, that it would not amuſe her; and Edward, toſſing the paper among the other publications of the day, ſagaciouſly obſerved, that the conduct of the preſent age correſponded more with the practices recorded by the Jewiſh claſſics than with the precepts of their auſtere lawgiver. "The offences," continued he, "which ſeem to give eclat to "thoſe heroes who are recorded in the ſongs of "their bards, are in their legiſlative code puniſh-"able with death, at leaſt if we ſuppoſe theſe "narrations literal. But we muſt allow, that "the beſt critics, conſidering the allegoriſing "temper of thoſe people, are led to believe, that "the whole compaſs of their literature is fabu-

"lous

" lous, and by no means poſſeſſing that claim " of high antiquity to which it pretends."

Henry's heart throbbed with indignation; but he determined to wait his opportunity of interpoſing when his audacious adverſary was thrown off his guard. Warm with affectionate zeal for thoſe truths from which her father had ſo often drawn inſtructive moral leſſons, and the moſt auguſt views of ſuperintending Providence gradually unfolding its amazing deſigns, Miſs Evans determined immediately to reply. " It cannot," thought ſhe, " be any dereliction of female mo- " deſty and delicacy to ſhow an infidel that " women may be courageous in a ſacred cauſe. " Even my father's avowed opinion, that we " ought to withdraw from controverſial topics, " would change with the exigency of the preſent " caſe, which calls me to repel the attacks of " profligacy and impiety united for the deſtruc- " tion of my unſuſpecting friend."

Determined by theſe reflections, ſhe addreſſed Fitzoſborne: " How long, ſir, have theſe ſaga- " cious critics ſucceeded in convincing the world " that their ſtile of reaſoning was juſt? My " father has devoted his whole life to the attain- " ment of ſacred learning; and I have heard him " ſay, that the attempts of ſceptics ſerved but to " confirm the ſtability of that heaven-erected " edifice which they ſought to undermine."

" The honour of an argument with Miſs " Evans," returned Edward bowing, " is too " great a novelty for me to decline embracing it; " and I cannot but lament that I have not been " previouſly prepared for the conteſt, by having " obtained a knowledge of the arguments by " which the ſuperior judgment of Mr. Evans was " decided. I am myſelf a ſincere friend to reli-

" gion, anxious for its *real* rights, and jealous " of its *true* honour; and as ſuch I have been " tempted to wiſh that ſome untenable points " were fairly given up, and that the profound " theologiſts of the preſent day would ſelect thoſe " paſſages which bear ſtronger marks of inſpira- " tion. I confeſs that I have often felt mortified " at ſeeing the abilities of the order exerted in " the defence of thoſe parts of the ſyſtem which " were more prudently abandoned by candid diſ- " putants."

" And I," ſaid Lucy, " have been mortified " too, when I have ſeen religion degraded by a " mock defence."

Mr. Powerſcourt exulted in the bluſh of honeſt indignation which glowed on his Lucy's cheek, and enjoyed the temporary confuſion of her adverſary. Fitzoſborne ſoon recovered; but, too much piqued to preſerve the uſual politeneſs of his manners, he begged Miſs Evans to have the goodneſs to repeat her father's obſervations. They would, he was ſure, be entitled to reſpect; perhaps might operate to his conviction. Were they drawn from his perfect acquaintance with the Greek and Hebrew languages, or had he ſtudied Syriac literature?

" I do not know," ſaid Lucy, ſenſible that this attack was deſigned to expoſe her.

" From chronology, natural philoſophy, or hiſ- " tory? But I believe, madam, you are yourſelf " miſtreſs of thoſe ſciences."

Miſs Evans's colour heightened with every interrogatory. There was a large party preſent, and ſhe felt the cruelty of thus holding her out to general ridicule. She blamed her own temerity in having attacked a Proteus who could hide his native deformity in a thouſand forms.

Henry

Henry felt her embarraſſment too ſtrongly not to relieve it. "Do not diſtreſs yourſelf, Miſs "Evans," ſaid he, "by endeavouring to recol- "lect your father's expreſſions. I had the hap- "pineſs of being educated under his auſpices, and "I know the value of his opinion too well to "withhold it from thoſe who deſire information."

"You were of Oxford, I think, ſir," ſaid Fitzoſborne, diſconcerted by the determined coolneſs of Henry's manner. "Several of my "friends muſt have been your cotemporaries." He then enumerated a long liſt, in which he took care to include the moſt conſpicuous young men of the age.

"My time," ſaid Henry, "was chiefly de- "voted to ſtudy, and I formed few connections. "Suppoſing myſelf deſtined for orders, I appli- "ed cloſely to the Greek and Hebrew languages, "and I made ſome progreſs in the Syriac. I at- "tended all the lectures on natural philoſophy, "and am not unacquainted with hiſtory and "chronology." His enumeration of the very topics on which Fitzoſborne had queſtioned Lucy was rendered more ſignificant by the modulation of his voice.

Fitzoſborne bowed, and expreſſed an earneſt wiſh to cultivate his acquaintance. The bow was returned. "I thought, ſir," added Henry, "that you were ſolicitous to receive a little infor- "mation reſpecting thoſe arguments which in- "duced Mr. Evans to affirm, that inveſtigation "had proved of inconceivable uſe in eſtabliſhing "the authenticity of the Old Teſtament."

"I ſhall eſteem it a particular favour if you "would inform me," replied Fitzoſborne. "Can "you give me your company in the library for "that purpoſe to-morrow morning? The ladies

"will thank us for adjourning the debate for "the preſent."

"I ſhould conceive, ſir," ſaid Powerſcourt, "that the ladies are intereſted in the authenticity "of their bibles; and when any doubts are ſtart-"ed, explanations ſhould follow of courſe. By "your calling forth a *lady* to debate theſe points, "you muſt certainly join in my opinion, that the "cauſe of inſpiration is perfectly ſafe in the hands "of that ſex, who are accuſtomed to argue from "the feelings of an unvitiated heart, rather than "from the cold deductions of the underſtand-"ing."

"No one," reſumed the evaſive Fitzoſborne, "can have a greater reſpect for female excel-"lence than myſelf; and before you profeſs "yourſelf the champion of ſentiment, as oppoſ-"ed to argumentative deductions, you ſhould "ſoften the aſperity which appears in your man-"ner, by remembering that I never attacked the "fair."

"Not in a direct way, I believe," ſaid Henry in a moſt animated voice, and at the ſame time leading the eye of his antagoniſt to the counteſs, who ſat netting near them, ſeemingly engroſſed by ſome country viſitors, but really attentive to this converſation.

Edward felt ſtruck as by an electrical ſhock. Habitual reſerve could not prevent a ſudden crimſon from ſuſhing his face; and his quickly withdrawn eye told a truth which he would willingly have concealed; namely, that he underſtood Powerſcourt's alluſion.

Unable to purſue a theme where diſcovery menaced every word, and precluded from the ſubterfuge which availed him in his former diſpute with Mr. Evans (I mean a reference of the argu-

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ment to ſome future time, which it depended upon himſelf to procraſtinate,) Fitzoſborne muſt either have waited for Henry's attack on deiſtical principles, or have renewed his own charge againſt the authenticity of the ſcriptures. He choſe the latter. He began to lead back the converſation by ſome flouriſhing compliments on the peculiar ſuitability of religion to the female character; and the impreſſion which every thing ſupernatural and elevated always made upon the delicate organs of their imaginations. His zeal to *correct* the ſacred text—(he uſed the term *correct* upon the preſent occaſion, in preference to his uſual expreſſions of *reform* or *improve*)—proceeded from a ſincere perſuaſion of the merits of ſeveral parts of the received canon, and a wiſh to expunge from it whatever might corrupt the delicacy of female readers, or harden their exquiſite ſenſibility of the narration of ſome acts of more than ſavage brutality.

'The ſimple manners and unrefined language 'of the earlier ages,' replied Henry, 'are re-'corded by their faithful hiſtorians in characters 'of undiſguiſed veracity. Our ideas of decorum 'vary with the cuſtoms of the time and country; 'but vice and virtue are ſtationary. It may be a 'ſubject of regret, that tranſlators who render 'authors of very remote antiquity ſhould think 'themſelves compelled to give a verbal tranſcript 'of paſſages which might be ſafely paraphraſed; 'yet, with reſpect to the bible, I obſerve, that 'ſome of thoſe interpreters who profeſs to avoid 'the faults which many years obſervation have 'diſcovered in our preſent copy, have ſubſtituted 'a ſort of gay licentiouſneſs in the place of the 'objectional groſſneſs, much more offenſive to 'the purity of the heart. Reſpecting your ſe-

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'cond obſervation, as I do not recollect any in-
'ſtance in which the vindictive ſpirit of the Jews
'is pointed out to the imitation of ſucceeding ages,
'I ſhould ſuppoſe their hiſtory might be ſtudied
'even in a critical or hiſtorical point of view as
'an authentic monument of ages but for inſpira-
'tion wholly obliterated, with leſs danger of ren-
'dering the feelings obdurate, than the page of
'Homer, or even the epic labours of that cham-
'pion of antichriſtian liberality, Voltaire."

'You forget," ſaid Fitzoſborne triumphantly,
'the merit annexed to the extirpation of the
'Canaanites, and the extinction of Amalek. Such
'pretended injunctions from the beneficent Pa-
'rent of the univerſe are with me a concluſive
'proof againſt the *entire* inſpiration of the Old
'Teſtament."

'I read in thoſe commands," replied Powerſ-
court, 'an inconteſtable mark of Divinity. I
'recollect the ſtate of ſociety at that time, and I
'venerate the merciful ſeverity which imprinted
'upon the minds of a ſmall portion of mankind
'a renewed abhorrence of that cruel and degrad-
'ing idolatry prohibited by one of the firſt com-
'mands which was imparted to the father of the
'Poſtdiluvian world. Surely, *you*, ſir, forget the
'maxim of a poet whoſe miſdirected muſe is of-
'ten quoted by our preſent deiſts to eſtabliſh
'principles from which he would have ſhrunk
'with horror. If

'——The great firſt cauſe
"Acts not by partial but by general laws;

'he is not bound by thoſe rules of conduct which
'determine the equity of the actions of imperfect,
'ſhort-ſighted, periſhable man. He, in whoſe
'hands are the iſſues of life and death, cannot

'be

'be called upon by his creatures to anſwer for the 'operations of any of his inſtruments of puniſh-'ment, be they famine, peſtilence, or war. To 'fulfil ſome vaſt deſign, perfected perhaps cen-'turies after its formation, the Jewiſh babe may 'bleed at Bethlehem, or the Calabrian infant be 'ingulphed with its parents by the deſolating 'earthquake, without impeding the juſtice of the 'Creator, with whom a thouſand years are but 'as a day. We finite creatures, ſtanding upon 'a little ſpeck of time, cannot comprehend the 'plans of infinitude, which extend to eternity. 'Admit a future ſtate, and every idea of particu-'lar ſeverity vaniſhes. He who exiſts for ever 'can recompence the unoffending children of the 'idolatrous worſhippers of Moloch with an hap-'py immortality. He who knows the heart can 'crown with perpetual bliſs the conſcientious 'aſſertors of a declining perſuaſion, whom the 'more peſtilent fanaticiſm of infidelity immolat-'ed upon the banks of the Loire. The giver of 'eternal life can reward the patience he exerciſes, 'and amply repay the premature privation of 'temporal exiſtence.'

The company liſtened with profound attention, rouſed by the ſolemn energy with which Mr. Powerſcourt delivered theſe ſentiments. Miſs Evans enjoyed the unaffected applauſe which appeared on every countenance. That of the lovely counteſs was lighted up by a moſt exhilarating ſmile, and her exulting heart whiſpered; 'Ed-'ward ſought conviction; ſurely he cannot reſiſt 'the heavenly energy of Henry's heartfelt expreſ-'ſions.' The converſation was not continued on this ſubject.

Eager to know if Fitzoſborne's opinion of Powerſcourt had been changed by this diſpute, Geraldine

Geraldine ſeized the earlieſt opportunity of aſking him, if ſhe had over-rated her kinſman's merits.

'Not in the leaſt,' was the reply. 'He is 'certainly very eloquent, and he poſſeſſes ſome 'command of temper, a virtue rarely found 'among your keen diſputants. But I need not, 'lady Monteith, explain to your ſagacity the ex-'act point in which I could have preſſed him, 'if politeneſs would have permitted me to have 'continued the argument. His whole reference 'is to infinitude and eternity, terms of which we 'can form no clear ideas. He gives no poſi-'tive proof, no mathematical demonſtration of 'the inſpiration which he tries to infer from con-'teſted poſitions; and till this is given by *our* 'ſchoolmen, deiſm may always reply, that in-'attention to thoſe duties which are merely pre-'ſcribed by revelation, admits of ſome excuſe, if 'we conſider the extreme doubt which attaches 'to theſe ſubjects; for, if our preſent code of 'religion may be true, it may alſo be falſe.'

'But is there not a great difficulty, if not a 'total impoſſibility, of giving the ſatisfactory 'proofs which you ſay are required?'

'There, madam,' ſaid Edward, 'is unhap-'pily the ſtrong hold of ſcepticiſm, of which all 'the powers of orthodoxy have not been able to 'diſpoſſeſs it. It is pleaded, and certainly with 'an air of reaſon, that if divine intelligence real-'ly dictated what we call revelation, it would 'carry with it inconteſtable proofs of its origin 'by ſilencing every objection, and enforcing 'conviction upon every mind.'

Cowardly lady Monteith! why, reſtrained by a fear of offending determined depravity, forbear affirming, that the gift of reaſon was never intended

intended to ſuperſede the practice of chriſtian graces? It was intended to confirm and aſſure that faith which ſhall one day be changed into certainty, to animate that hope which her boaſted power could never clearly diſcover without divine guidance. Why fear to drive the mean diſſimulator from the affected decency of deiſm into the bold audacity of atheiſm, by aſking, how animated duſt and aſhes can preſume to queſtion the power which called it into exiſtence, demanding, 'Why 'haſt thou made me what I am?' How intelligence confeſſedly finite can charge the counſels of that mind which pervades infinitude and extends through eternity, with inconſiſtency in preſcribing a rule of action to probationary beings, without at the ſame time compelling obſervance? Why forbear to inquire how his favourite free-will can conſiſt with ſuch a ſcheme of government? Nay, bid him not ſtop at the moral world; but ſay, why earth is not heaven, and man an incorporeal eſſence, ſuch as we believe the bleſſed inhabitants of that better region. Reſtrained by the growing attachment which, though confined within the ſtricteſt bounds that the ſpecious affectation of Platonic affection could impoſe, and unacknowledged even to herſelf, certainly made Fitzoſborne's approbation of conſequence to her peace, lady Monteith forbore to oppoſe where ſhe dreaded to offend; and ſhe contented herſelf with wiſhing the mind of the moſt amiable of men to be relieved from thoſe doubts which his converſations ſometimes transfuſed into her own boſom.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

Why, I can ſmile, and murder while I ſmile;
And cry, 'Content' to that which grieves my heart;
And wet my cheek with artificial tears;
And frame my face to all occaſions.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE diſpute which occupied the preceding Chapter was not the only inſtance of the triumph of manly ſenſe and ſound principle over ſophiſtry, declamation, and hypocriſy. Conſcious of his advantage, Mr. Powerſcourt at every opportunity purſued infidelity into its retreats of falſehood. He expoſed the credulity of diſbelief, the inconſiſtency of ſcepticiſm, and the inconcluſive futility of every argument which dared to ſet up Nature in oppoſition to its Author.

It was not with a hope of effecting any change in Fitzoſborne that Henry thus continued to dare him to the 'keen encounter of their 'wits;' he knew from inconteſtable authority, 'that thoſe who love darkneſs rather than light, 'becauſe their deeds are evil,' muſt conſtantly reſiſt the elucidating ray of truth. It was the ſituation of the Monteiths which urged him to this continual warfare. He plainly ſaw the predilection of the counteſs, and the infatuation of her lord; and he vainly wiſhed for that 'warning voice' which might arouſe them to a conſciouſneſs of their danger. He was not without

without hope too, that Edward's pride, mortified by repeated defeats, might provoke him to quit a reſidence which continual oppoſition muſt render diſagreeable; and, ſtimulated by the enterprizing warmth of ſincere friendſhip, he ſcarcely calculated the chance of being called out by a man, who, on ſome previous occaſions, had proved himſelf to be

> Jealous of honour, ſudden and quick in quarrel;
> Seeking the bubble reputation
> Even in the cannon's mouth.

But the patience and humility which Edward exerciſed upon this occaſion was as wonderful as his perſeverance. Let not the reader conclude that I give him credit for thoſe virtues; for it cannot be ſuppoſed that he would adopt qualities which he eſteemed to be weak imperfections. He uſed them only as the means which were ſanctified by the propoſed end. Taught by his recent defeat to abſtain from attack, he contented himſelf with barely *attempting* a defence, when Powerſcourt preſſed him with ſome powerful inference; always taking care that ſomething in his expreſſion, look, or manner, ſhould convey to the quick apprehenſion of Geraldine a hint of unfair treatment; an inſinuation of his love of peace; and a complaint that his adverſary began the debate, and that it was unjuſt to ſeek to deprive him of his own opinions, when he did not moleſt others in the quiet enjoyment of their peculiar notions.

Lady Monteith loved ſociety, and few people were better calculated than herſelf to enjoy

and impart the nameleſs delights of converſation. Whether we define it, according to the ideas of the Swan of Twickenham, to be 'the 'feaſt of reaſon and the flow of ſoul;' or, perſonifying its exhilarating graces, deſcribe it in the likeneſs of Milton's Euphroſyne, 'buck-'ſome, blithe, and debonaire,' yet ſtill the aſſociate of 'unreproved pleaſure;' in whichever ſhape the goddeſs preſides, the irritating ſpirit of contradiction, and the ſcowling genius of continual argument, muſt be proſcribed admiſſion, or the ſweets of the mental banquet will be ſoured by fermentation. The relaxed mind cannot repoſe upon the boſom of confidence, and pour forth all its choiceſt ſtores, when every expreſſion rouſes the clamour of oppoſition. The dimpled ſmile of ſportive mirth is too timid to encounter the auſtere aſpect of declamatory inveſtigation.

Such were the reflections of Geraldine, who, driven by conjugal infelicity to ſeek amuſement out of herſelf, had fondly hoped that the moſt refined ſocial pleaſures would reſult from the friends of her early youth meeting with the accompliſhed intelligent Fitzoſborne. She had anticipated the delights of literary converſation, the coruſcations of playful wit; and, while ſhe enjoyed with ſincere pleaſure the proſpect of her Lucy's happineſs, ſhe determined to divert herſelf with the little aukwardneſſes which the preſence of a beloved object generally gives to the manner of a young woman poſſeſſed of a delicate ſuſceptible mind. Inſtead of theſe expected luxuries, the demon of Diſpute took poſſeſſion of the dining-room and the ſaloon; accompanied their walks and rides, their fiſhing parties and mountain tours;

and,

and, instead of leaving the mind of the countess at liberty to entertain her guests with something enchantingly whimsical, or negligently elegant, her anxiety was perpetually exercised to repress every topic of discourse which threatened contention.

Perhaps Geraldine overcharged this description. She was also mistaken in fixing the whole blame of this controversial spirit upon Henry. More accustomed to Edward's style of conversation, and less aware of its tendency, he could at any time drop the gage of defiance without arresting her attention, till the reply of his antagonist called her to divert the rising storm. Her insensibility of her own danger, and consequent ignorance of the conscientious motives which urged Mr. Powerscourt to violate the prescribed rules of good breeding strictly adhered to in polished society, precluded her from framing any excuses in his justification. That eternal gratitude which she had promised to preserve for the generous friend who had sacrificed his own happiness to her's, imperceptibly abated, as the conviction that she had founded her hopes of connubial felicity on a wrong basis gathered strength. On the other hand, the recent services of Fitzosborne, and the marked contrast between him and her lord, hourly made a deeper impression; and her disapprobation of what she thought cavalier behaviour increased her indifference for the society of Lucy and her lover. Real esteem could not be weakened; but affection sensibly declined, at least so far as to make her wish them married and happily settled at Powerscourt.

Geraldine's estrangement from her once-loved friends could not be attributed to Mr. Fitz-

Fitzoſborne's *ſuggeſtions*. However poignantly his feelings might be wounded, he was too generous to complain; and reſpect for the relation of his fair friend withheld him from anſwering his perſecutor as moſt gentlemen would do. As ſome of his own notions had a tendency to democracy, he could not conſiſtently hint the humble ſituation of Henry's father, as a reaſon why his ſon was unfit to mix with men of rank. Beſide, he recollected that he had paſſed through the purifying ordeal of a college education, which always conſumes every particle of plebeian infection; and that he could not caſt an oblique cenſure on his origin without involving the reputation of the high-ſeated Powerſcourt anceſtry. He therefore never uttered a ſarcaſm of the kind; nay he even once attempted to ſoften Geraldine's diſpleaſure, who confeſſed herſelf to be a little hurt at her couſin's behaviour, by obſerving, that Mr. Powerſcourt's early connections might not have led him into very poliſhed ſociety, and that habit was an irreſiſtible enemy to that amenity of manners which marked the gentleman.

But though thus cautious with reſpect to the counteſs, the daring genius of Fitzoſborne winged a bolder flight with her credulous lord. He too retained but a faint remembrance of the merit of the ſelf-denying, accommodating rival, who had reſigned the girl he loved to his happier vows. He forgot the dejection and ſubſequent illneſs which ſpoke the anguiſh of the ſacrifice; and no longer finding, that the poſſeſſion of that bleſſing which the generous Henry reluctantly reſigned had confirmed his own happineſs, he was prepared to look upon him as he would upon any other gueſt, and to

regulate

regulate his behaviour to him, not by a ſenſe of gratitude or eſteem, but by the preſent amuſement he received from his converſation. I have ſufficiently explained lord Monteith's character for my readers to anticipate my confeſſion, that his powers of diſcrimination were very limited. In fact, hating controverſy, which he not unaptly called quarrelling, if he could not contrive, by playing with his dogs or his children, to make ſufficient noiſe to prevent himſelf from hearing the diſpute, he rang the bell for his horſes and took a ride.

He had purſued this method twice before the hint was underſtood, a ſufficient excuſe for the total loſs of patience which followed.—Deceived by his own impetuoſity, and ſome inſinuations of Fitzoſborne, he miſtook the part which the counteſs acted upon theſe occaſions, which was generally that of a mediatrix; for, though inclination led her to join with Edward, eſpecially when he more nicely affected the plauſible, yet if Henry, by preſſing his arguments cloſe, ſurpriſed his opponent in the avowal of ſome bold tenets, Geraldine could not refrain from expreſſing her approbation of the champion of ſteady principle. Lord Monteith once entered the room, when every tongue was loud in declaiming againſt ſome poſitions which Fitzoſborne had juſt attempted to maintain on the ſubject of education. They were, that as it is preſumptuous to aſſert, that obedience to parents is any thing more than the preference of reaſon enforced by affection, the child ought to lead its own ſtudies, and the parent or inſtructor follow; for youth ſhould enjoy perfect liberty, and be led to knowledge not by authority, but by inclination. His lordſhip had no diſpoſition

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to give himself the trouble of understanding the debate. He heard something of the cruelty of debarring innocent infants of the liberty with which nature had endowed them, and he saw every one united in condemning Fitzosborne. He was an advocate for children enjoying themselves, and he never either restrained or corrected his own, except when they interrupted his particular pursuits. He was, beside, strongly impelled to support Fitzosborne, who was now become absolutely necessary to him in the double capacity of a flatterer and an adviser.

The earl took a chair; obtained the lead in conversation; and soon made himself master of the field by silencing all opposition. He cast a look of triumph round him. 'What,' said he to Geraldine, 'have you not one word left 'to defend your opinion? You was haranguing 'very learnedly, and laying down a system of 'management which you meant to adopt—with 'James, I suppose; but as I may not converse 'with you upon this subject again, I would ad- 'vise you to give it up, for I shall never allow 'it. You have broke the spirit of the poor 'girls already by your lessons and your punish- 'ments; and I shall educate the boy according 'to my own plan.'

The countess answered by an acquiescent smile; but his lordship had talked himself into a fit of indignation, which some domestic perplexities secretly increased. He arose, and, giving his chair rather a whirl than a push, stalked out of the room.

Every one who has witnessed little conjugal rencontres knows, that it is the business of bystanders to take no notice of the passing scene, but to exert the happiest address to divert the attention.

tention of the parties engaged to ſome new ſubject. Geraldine's ſtarting tears were repreſſed by Lucy's obſerving, that an uncommonly beautiful butterfly reſted upon the chimney-piece; and at the ſame inſtant Henry called her to remark the characteriſtic ſtyle of excellence which diſtinguiſhed Titian's paintings. Fitzoſborne was loſt in dejected ſilence. He however roſe, as if to examine the picture which Henry had pointed out; and fancying his attention engroſſed by the butterfly hunt, which Miſs Evans enlivened by a hundred humorous obſervations, he whiſpered to the ſtill-agitated counteſs, as he paſſed her; 'Dear ſuffering meekneſs! ſhall I 'follow him, and try to calm his ſavage frenzy?' ſhe faintly articulated, 'Yes,' and her champion inſtantly withdrew. A thought that moment ſtruck the counteſs, that his interpoſition might add to the paſſion which quiet ſelf-reflection would beſt ſubdue. The colours of nature or of Titian could no longer give a tranſitory diverſion to the pangs of thought. The hitherto reſtrained tears burſt from her eyes, and ſhe haſtily flew after Fitzoſborne.

'That man is a villain,' ſaid Henry to his Lucy, who was now the only perſon remaining with him in the room.

'I never doubted it,' ſaid ſhe, relinquiſhing the juſt-vanquiſhed butterfly. 'But have you 'any freſh proofs?' Powerſcourt repeated the whiſper which he had diſtinctly overhard.

'O my lovely, enchanting Geraldine, how 'perilous is thy ſituation!' exclaimed Miſs Evans; 'between a huſband inſenſible of thy 'virtues, and a pretended friend who is determined to undermine them!'

'And

'And how fatally inſenſible of her danger!' continued Powerſcourt.

'Are there no means to ſave her?'

'I have tried what to my judgment appeared to 'be the moſt probable, and I have purſued them 'beyond the bounds which regard for the deco-'rum of my own character would have impoſed. 'I have clearly detected his principles, and, I 'ſometimes hope, armed the counteſs againſt 'their ſeductive poiſons. But I cannot remove 'him from Monteith. He endures my perſe-'cution with a patience which convinces me 'that he will not be provoked to retreat; and I 'have no influence either with the earl or Ge-'raldine. What can prevent her from every 'day, nay every hour, perceiving the ſtrong 'contraſt between his ſoft, inſinuating, poliſhed 'manner, and the inconſiſtent, uninformed—I 'had almoſt ſaid—cruel, deportment of her 'much-altered lord? You ſee, Edward himſelf 'draws the parallel.'

'And our beloved friend feels it,' added Lucy. 'Can there be a ſtronger proof of his deſigns 'than the whiſper which you juſt overheard?'

'Yes,' replied Powerſcourt, 'there is a ſtron-'ger. She is lovely and attractive as fancy 'ever feigned. And what ſhall induce that 'man to reſiſt the power of her charms, who 'has ſilenced the reſtraints of conſcience, who 'fears no future retribution, and who has ſuffi-'cient cunning to elude the pecuniary puniſh-'ments which our laws award to his licentious 'crimes? Hourly expoſed to the blaze of Ge-'raldine's perfections, indulged by a credulous 'huſband with every opportunity for ſeducing 'her honour, he muſt feel the faſcination of 'her beauty and her merit. Nay, his attentions

'prove,

'prove, even to caſual obſervers, that he does 'feel them. My right hand neighbour at the 'earl's laſt public dinner, aſked me, 'Who is 'this Mr. Fitzoſborne?' I told him, an admirer 'of lady Arabella Macdonald. 'I am very 'glad to hear that,' ſaid the blunt enquirer; 'for we country people fancied he made love 'to the counteſs.'

Lucy determined to tell her friend this ſtory, and Powerſcourt approved the ſuggeſtion. 'Be 'careful, however,' ſaid he; 'alarm her deli-'cacy, but not her pride. Convince her, that 'it is only *ſtrangers* that can doubt her recti-'tude; that ſhe owes the immediate diſmiſſion 'of Fitzoſborne to the judgment of the world, 'not to the opinions of thoſe friends who know 'her worth, and who deem it almoſt impoſſible 'that ſhe ſhould fall.'

'And ſo it is,' ſaid Miſs Evans with energy. 'I defy all the traitor's arts to allure her to wil-'ful guilt. She cannot feel any real predilec-'tion in his favour.'

'Ah, Lucy,' interrupted Henry, 'we ſoon 'ceaſe from the perſecuting attentions which 'we find *diſpleaſe* the object of our purſuit.'—Lucy aſked him whether he learned that maxim of her or Geraldine; and the converſation changed to a more agreeable topic.

In the mean time lady Monteith had overtaken Fitzoſborne, and, finding her perſuaſions to induce him to abandon his deſign of reproving her lord for his petulance ineffectual, ſhe extorted from him an engagement, that he would act with the gentleſt caution. This agreement, like the promiſes of the weird ſiſter to the guilty Thane of Cawdor, was 'kept to the ear, but 'broken to the ſenſe.' The caution was exer-

ciſed

ciſed for his own ſecurity, and the gentleneſs was the refined covering of ſimulation.

He had that day made himſelf maſter of a ſecret, the diſcovery of which would, he knew, point the whole torrent of the earl's fretful impatience againſt the counteſs and Mr. Powerſcourt. I have frequently ſtated, that lord Monteith's natural character ſtrongly partook of generoſity and benevolence. Theſe noble ſenſations, blunted by ſelfiſhneſs and inconſideration, were now effectually chilled by the embarraſſments attendant on perplexed circumſtances; and his irritable temper was continually fretted by the repreſentations of his agents, and the ſolicitations of his creditors. It was to ſome harraſſing occurrences of this nature, that his late behaviour to the counteſs muſt be aſcribed; and the moment he left the room, his ſenſe of her meek ſufferance added to his torment. He flung himſelf upon the bank of the canal which wound round the managerie, and was beginning to yield to that tranquillity of mind which the warbling birds, the waving trees, and the calm ſplendour of a mild autumnal ſun, inſpired, when Fitzoſborne ſeated himſelf by his ſide.

'When do you cut a communication between 'this canal and the lake?' inquired he. The earl only anſwered by a profound ſigh.

'You told me,' reſumed his tormentor, 'that 'you had ſuch a deſign. You alſo mentioned 'your intention of levelling a ſmall eminence 'which intercepts your view of the Grampian 'hills.'

Stung by the recollection of thoſe plans of princely magnificence by which he had once intended to embelliſh the ſeat of his anceſtors, lord

lord Monteith could only anſwer by execrating the dice-box.

'My good friend,' ſaid Fitzoſborne, 'why 'perſiſt in teazing yourſelf with uſeleſs recol-'lections of paſt misfortunes? Let us look for-'ward to the future. You have noble expec-'tations. Sir William Powerſcourt cannot in 'the courſe of nature live long.—But I be-'lieve I ſhould not have entered upon that 'painful ſubject.'

Lord Monteith, who at that inſtant felt the miſery of ſtraitened circumſtances too ſtrongly to regard with ſorrow the death of an old man who would leave him a handſome fortune, inquired, why he ſhould think it ſuch a painful event? 'There is a great deal of whimſical 'goodneſs about the old baronet,' added he; 'but people cannot live for ever.'

'I did not ſuſpect you of the puerility of 'grieving for his death,'' ſaid Edward ſmiling. 'I allude to the awkward circumſtances in 'which you will be placed at his demiſe.'

'Is coming into the poſſeſſion of five thouſand 'a-year an awkward circumſtance?'

'No; but I think I ſhould not like to be the 'mere ſteward of my wife and children. I 'ſhould rather like to have the expenditure di-'rected by myſelf.'

'And who elſe will direct it?' inquired the earl, raiſing himſelf from the ground.

'Poſſibly you have ſome influence over the 'part which is ſettled upon your daughter or 'your unborn ſon; but the two thouſand a-year 'which the counteſs diſpoſes of will be totally 'diverted from your purſe.'

'Why, what does ſhe mean to do with it?'

'Are

'Are you really ignorant of her deſigns then?' 'I muſt have been miſinformed.' Repeated entreaties drew from Fitzoſborne what he now termed a mere gueſs of his own, ariſing from the peculiar warmth of the counteſs in her friendſhips; namely, that it was intended to increaſe the opulence of Mr. Powerſcourt and his bride. Then, looking attentively on the earl, he inquired what 'bloody paſſion ſhook 'his very frame;" and he entreated him not to be diſcompoſed at his idle ſuppoſitions; at leaſt, to paſs the matter in ſilence till it was better confirmed. My lord promiſed; but his behaviour to Mr. Powerſcourt became, in conſequence, ſo ſtrikingly inhoſpitable, that the latter ſoon found himſelf compelled to leave a family, in which, independent of his attachment to his Lucy, the livelieſt feelings of his heart were now centered.

Inſtead of obtruding his keen ſenſe of Monteith's extraordinary behaviour upon the obſervation of the counteſs, he contrived to give his departure the air of choice; and he declined with an air of regret rather than pique Geraldine's faint invitation to ſpend another week with them. He had, however, entruſted Miſs Evans with his real ſentiments. 'I am con-'vinced,' ſaid he, 'that the earl is but the pup-'pet of the treacherous Fitzoſborne on this 'occaſion. There are ſome maſterly but dia-'bolical machinations on foot which I cannot 'develope. My continuing here can be of no 'ſervice; indeed it is impoſſible, conſidering 'the treatment which I hourly experience. No 'effort of mine could ſhake the confidence 'which this credulous tool of ſubtle villainy 'repoſes in the betrayer of his peace. Be

'you,

'you, therefore, my Lucy, the Guardian angel,
'and watch over your much-endangered, too
'confident friend. I know your zeal and your
'unshaken fidelity; but I fear you will be called
'upon for exertions which will put your forti-
'tude to the severest trial. Endure the altered
'looks of your Geraldine; even brave her re-
'sentment. Remember, that she is now la-
'bouring under the impulse of a fatal delusion,
'and that her returning reason must bless the
'hand which snatches her from destruction.'

'I know, Henry,' replied Lucy, 'that I shall
'continually want your directing judgment.
'O that we had her safe at Powerscourt! How
'would we join to pour the balm of friendship
'on her wounded soul!'

'Cannot you,' said Henry, 'plead a little
'pardonable caprice, and say you have made
'a resolution not to confirm my happiness till
'the dear companion of our youth is present,
'to see your father knit the solemn bond which
'will make you for ever mine?"

'I know not," cried Lucy, giving her hand to her lover with a faint smile, 'what folly
'I would not affect to save my Geraldine.'

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

Is all the counſel that we two have ſhar'd,
The ſiſter's vows, the hours that we have ſpent,
When we have chid the tardy footed time
For parting us; O and is all forgot?
All ſchool-days friendſhip, childhood innocence?—
And will you rend our ancient love aſunder?

SHAKESPEARE.

IT is a general obſervation, that ceremony increaſes as affection declines. Conſcious of the unkindneſs which we bluſh to avow, we poorly attempt to diſguiſe our inconſtancy by a parade of words, without conſidering that we betray our hypocriſy by a ſcrupulous regard to thoſe minutiæ, to which, while our hearts glowed with real regard, we were too much occupied to attend.

In proportion as lady Monteith felt the pleaſure ſhe took in Miſs Evans's ſociety really diminiſh, ſhe was more obſervant in her hoſpitable attentions, not with a view to deceive, but from the more generous motive of wiſhing to avoid giving pain. Though ſhe would not have felt any uneaſineſs to have ſeen her accompany Henry back to Caernarvonſhire, ſhe expreſſed a lively ſenſe of her Lucy's goodneſs in remaining. She was ever fearful at dinner that her friend was not taken good care of; and though Miſs Evans had made repeated viſits to Monteith, it now firſt occurred to the counteſs, that there was an impropriety in lodging

lodging her in one of the turret chambers, though the primary reaſon for doing ſo had been, that it was the neareſt to her own.

Lucy experienced all the trials which Henry had predicted; but ſhe recollected, that ſhe had determined to endure them. "Let the worſt 'come,' ſaid ſhe, 'that my fears predict, her 'heart can never be vitiated. The moment 'the ſeducer pulls off the maſk, ſhe will detect 'him; and as the deluſion vaniſhes, her ſuſ-'ceptible heart will recal thoſe *real* friends 'who ſtrove to ſnatch her from deſtruction.'

Vice is never ſecure, even when triumphant. Let earth and hell conſpire to favour its deſigns, nothing is ſo mean, nothing ſo cowardly as guilt. The removal of Powerſcourt was a grand point gained; but the watchful, fearleſs, determined Lucy remained; and though Fitz-oſborne perceived her influence hourly decline, he felt her preſence to be an impediment to his concluding machinations. He could not baniſh her, as he had done Henry, by the agency of the earl; for the whim of the moment always predominated with that nobleman. The inconveniences which he fancied he ſuffered from a controverſial propenſity, produced his reſolution of driving his gueſt from Monteith; and though the ſuſpicion, that Henry was intended to inherit a large portion of ſir William's eſtate gave that determination immediate action, it was conſidered ſeparately as a circumſtance which lord Monteith's generoſity would have entirely diſregarded in a leſs embarraſſed ſtate of his own affairs. He well knew that Miſs Evans was intended to ſhare in his lady's liberality; but ſhe was leſs objectionable to him, on the important account of her never attempt-

ing a formal argument. He deteſted long harangues; but a piquant retort was his delight, and ſhe was peculiarly happy at repartee. Her ſprightly unaffected manner, and comparative ignorance of faſhionable life, amuſed him: and ſhe had long borne him a degree of affection as being the huſband of her friend. She eſteemed his good qualities; and her concern for the deluſion under which he laboured induced her to be even more than uſually attentive to his humour, and indulgent to his follies.

But though Fitzoſborne was thus compelled to leave Monteith out of his counſel, and Lucy refuſed to read a wiſh for her removal in the fickly ſunſhine of her Geraldine's languid ſmiles, he reſolved, that other means ſhould expedite her departure. A project was therefore contrived. The evening before its completion, lord Monteith had devoted to his increaſing love for Bacchanalian indulgences. The hour was late, but madeira and burgundy preſerved their attractions. The joyous party had ſent excuſes to the counteſs for not joining her in the ſaloon; and Geraldine, after ſupporting a languid evening with her two friends, (for Fitzoſborne had early pleaded indiſpoſition as a reaſon for leaving the noiſy Anacreontics,) retired to her own apartment.

She was here encountered by her favourite attendant, who with much reluctance, and many aſſurances that ſhe would not have taken ſuch a liberty, but that ſhe really had already advanced all her own money to the diſtreſſed parties, preſented a petition from the workmen who had been employed in laying the foundation of the amphitheatre which was begun in the park. They were now reduced

to

to the laſt diſtreſs, not only by an unexpected diſmiſſion from their employment, but by the non-payment of wages already due. Maria declared, that her father and brothers were of the number; and the many anecdotes of authentic ſuffering which ſhe recited, and traced to this culpable remiſſneſs, ſwelled the feeling heart of Geraldine with indignation and pity. 'My lord,' ſaid ſhe, 'promiſed to pay all the 'bills immediately, as ſome compenſation for 'the diſappointment I cauſed the workmen, by 'giving up the deſign before they had finiſhed 'the work they had contracted to execute. It 'muſt be the ſteward's fault. Is he up? I will 'ſpeak to him immediately.'

'There was a light in his office when your 'ladyſhip rang the bell.'

'Deſire him to come up ſtairs. But no; 'he is very old and infirm; I will go to him.'

The reſult of the converſation was not at all to the counteſs's ſatisfaction. She found that the delay was wholly attributable to her lord, who had inſiſted that the appropriated ſums ſhould be tranſmitted where the claims were leſs juſt, but more clamorous. The ſteward mentioned many other circumſtances which increaſed her agitation, and he anſwered her earneſt ſolicitations that theſe bills might be immediately diſcharged, by pleading that it was totally impoſſible to advance what was not in his poſſeſſion.

Geraldine returned towards her own apartment, ruminating on what meaſures ſhe could purſue, and determining privately to diſpoſe of ſome of her mother's jewels, rather than that the helpleſs babes of the labourer ſhould want bread. While ſhe was croſſing the gallery

leading from the ſtair-caſe, the loud but indiſtinct noiſe of catches and glees inarticulately ſung, and interrupted by applauding clamours, or reproving oaths, iſſued from the banquetting room. She ſtopped for a moment, and fancied that ſhe heard Monteith's voice. 'Has he 'then,' ſaid ſhe, 'loſt all the feelings of hu-'manity, as well as all ſenſe of refined plea-'ſure? Compaſſion, nay juſtice demands, that 'the waſte of riot ſhould have been appropri-'ated to nobler ends.'

Her eye then glanced towards the library, which was at the end of a ſuite of rooms oppoſite to where ſhe ſtood. The door was open, and ſhe ſaw Fitzoſborne ſit with a book in his hand in a poſture of fixed attention. She never felt the power of contraſt ſo ſtrong before; and a momentary impulſe almoſt tempted her to tear from her finger the witneſs of that bond which had ſealed her miſery.

Still Fitzoſborne continued to read, and Geraldine, leaning over the baluſtrade, ſtill alternately looked and liſtened. 'O ſplendid wretch-'edneſs!' ſaid ſhe, gazing on the marble figures which decorated the ſtair-caſe, and the richly carved roof, now rendered more conſpicuous by the coloured lamps which hung from every pediment; 'the lonely villager, whom 'we abridge in his ſcanty enjoyments, curſes 'this parade of luxury; and the curſes of the 'injured will one day come into judgment 'againſt their proud oppreſſors."

Still indulging her melancholy feelings, the counteſs contemplated the compoſure of Fitzoſborne's looks. 'All muſt be right,' ſaid ſhe, 'in his boſom. He is neither tortured by re-'morſe nor fear; and can what I have heard

'of

'of the ſceptic's wretched ſtate be juſt? Perhaps at this moment I ſhould feel ſome conſolation in thinking, that the great Author of the univerſe is too much engroſſed by his own perfections to take cognizance of things below; for then I need not fear his avenging the wrongs of indigence." At that inſtant the cries of her little ſon in the nurſery threw her thoughts into a different train. 'Ah! my poor babes,' reſumed ſhe, 'whatever is my own lot, a mother muſt, for your ſakes, hope that there is a *ſpecial* Providence to protect your helpleſs infancy.'

Fitzoſborne now roſe, and, advancing towards her, interrupted her muſings. 'For Heaven's ſake, deareſt lady Monteith! what keeps you up at this late hour?'—'My ſorrows,' replied the counteſs, burſting into tears.

'I hoped,' returned Edward, affectionately preſſing her hand, 'that they were huſhed in oblivion. Permit me to lead you from the hearing of theſe offenſive revellers. It is too ſhocking to refined delicacy like yours.'

Geraldine inquired where they ſhould go? and Fitzoſborne propoſed the garden. 'The Comus of this place will not lead his band of waſſailers there,' ſaid he. 'The meaner organs of theſe ſatyrs are only capable of enjoying the groſſeſt animal gratifications. Pardon my alluſion. I have juſt been enraptured by the ſublime bard's deſcription of revel jollity. How different is the brutal vociferation which we hear from theſe rapturous ideas:

'Braid your locks with roſy twine,
'Dropping odours, dropping wine,

'Rigour

'Rigour now is gone to bed,
'And Advice with ſcrup'lous head.
'By dimpled brook, and fountain brim,
'The Wood-Nymphs deckt with daiſies trim,
'Their merry wakes and paſtimes keep:
'What hath night to do with ſleep?'

His further quotation was here interrupted by the appearance of Miſs Evans, who, declaring the evening was much too beautiful to think of going to bed, propoſed joining them in their excurſion into the garden. They took a ſhort and ſilent turn under the colonade, and then retired to their apartments.

The counteſs very ſoon after perceived that Miſs Evans was at her chamber-door. 'I am 'haunted, my dear Geraldine," ſaid ſhe, 'by 'ſome very diſagreeable company; my own 'thoughts I mean. Will you allow me to loſe 'them for one hour by converſing with you?' Lady Monteith deſired her maid to retire, and the two friends ſat for a few moments gazing at each other in expreſſive ſilence.

Miſs Evans firſt ſpoke: 'There was a time, 'my Geraldine, when our full-fraught hearts 'never wanted a ſubject for converſation. That 'confidence is paſt, I ſee; yet I will neither 'lament nor complain. But for your own, 'for your dear children's ſake, let not any re-'cently-diſcovered fault in me induce you to 'ſlight the important diſcoveries that I can re-'veal. My anxiety for your little boy, who is 'not quite well, brought me this night to wit-'neſs a fuller confirmation of Fitzoſborne's 'villany.'

'What villany?' inquired Geraldine with an unaltered countenance.

'He

'He placed himself purposely in the library, 'that you might see him.'

'What then?'

'I firmly believe too, that the banqueting-'room door was set open by his order, that 'you might hear the confusion"

'And was not lord Monteith most to blame 'to cause that confusion?'

'I do not vindicate my lord. O, my sainted 'mother! if I could but breathe the energy 'of thy discerning spirit into my dear unsus-'picious friend——'

'I never knew that Mrs. Evans thought sus-'picion a virtue.'

'She never would have suffered an audacious 'man to have offended her ears with reflec-'tions on my father's conduct. Though mild, 'and patient of reproofs to herself, her quick 'susceptibility of his honour——'

'You surely do not recollect,' interrupted lady Monteith, 'that the comparison you have 'started is most exquisitely painful to me. I 'will only say, that the regularity of your fa-'ther's conduct disproved slander. Do *you* 'draw the inference.' The tears which at that instant streamed from her eyes avowed her tortured heart.

'My sweetest Geraldine! can I witness those 'tears, and not wish to relieve thy sorrows?'

'Then seek not to deprive me of my only 'friend.'

'Your *only* friend! How is your style of 'of expression changed! What then am I? 'what is Henry Powerscourt?'

'Both strangely altered by unjust suspici-'ous.'

'Our

'Our ſuſpicions are not pointed at you. We 'know that you are pure, and guiltleſs of the 'ſmalleſt *intentional* fault. We grieve to ſee 'your candour betrayed, your unſuſpecting in-'nocence inſnared, your reputation blaſted."

'My reputation blaſted, Miſs Evans? Are 'you not cruel in referring to a ſlanderous 'tale, invented by envy and falſehood, which 'you once told me my conduct ſufficiently diſ-'proved?'

'No! no! my heart is a ſtranger to deſigned 'cruelty to any one, and leaſt of all to you. 'It is not to the attacks of malignity, it is to 'the concluſions of guileleſs ſimplicity, that I 'refer.' She then repeated the obſervations which were addreſſed to Mr. Powerſcourt at the public dinner.

'Muſt I then,' aid the counteſs, 'clear my 'character to the world by throwing treble 'odium upon my lord's? or, muſt I renounce 'the only companion who ſeems ſtudious to 'ſweeten the bitter cup of anguiſh which I 'now drain to the dregs? Am I to publiſh the 'obligations which I owe to Fitzoſborne? obli-'gations which would juſtify me in every one's 'opinion; or ſit a lone, ſolitary, ſlighted being 'in this magnificent priſon?'

Lucy now melted into tears. 'Does your 'palace, your bower of bliſs, as you once ſtyled 'it, now receive that appellation? O! what 'has wrought this dreadful change? It is not 'quite a twelvemonth ſince your own dear 'hand-writing to me traced theſe ſtrong ex-'preſſions. 'I enjoy as much happineſs as 'experience teaches us to expect in this un-'certain world. I poſſeſs my huſband's affec-'tionate confidence, the eſteem of my friends,

'the

'the love of my dependants. With what heart-
'felt tranſport, my Lucy, do I tell you, that
'lord Monteith ſeems every hour more firmly at-
'tached to me and his children. You know his
'manner is ſingular. It once gave me pain, but
'reflection has reconciled me to it, and I diſcover,
'even in his eccentricities, indubitable marks of
'an excellent heart.' Do not wring your hands,
'my love! I do not recite this paſſage to awaken
'your poignant feelings, but to convince your
'judgment.'

Miſs Evans paused; the counteſs was unable to ſpeak, and ſhe proceeded.

'Can all this ruin originate from chance? 'Can your lord withdraw his affection, his con-
'fidence, nay even treat you with ſeverity, with-
'out ſome tempter? Truſt me, my Geraldine,
'if Fitzoſborne were indeed your friend, the in-
'fluence which he ſo eminently poſſeſſes over
'your impetuous lord muſt be apparent and
'produce the moſt oppoſite behaviour.'

'In what,' ſaid Geraldine, recovering herſelf, 'do you perceive this influence? does lord Mon-
'teith ever coincide with Fitzoſborne's ſenti-
'ments?'

'Rather ſay, does he ever oppoſe them? Fitz-
'oſborne is too ſubtle to let me ever hear his *real*
'ſentiments; but I read them reflected in the
'undiſguiſed countenance of your lord. His eye
'continually watches his artful favourite, a
'proof that he feels his influence. He is not on-
'ly warm and uniform in his approbation of
'Fitzoſborne, but his behaviour is marked by a
'degree of reſpect and deference which I never
'obſerved him to ſhew to any one elſe, except to
'you in thoſe happy days when you reigned the
'undiſputed ſovereign of his heart. You,

'who knew the gentle clue by which he was 'imperceptibly led to comply with your wiſhes, 'muſt know, that the delicate management 'which his temper requires can only be viſible 'to others by its effect.'

'For what purpoſe ſhould Edward wiſh for 'this aſcendancy over lord Monteith?" inquired 'the counteſs.

'In my opinion for the moſt diabolical pur-'poſe—to alienate his heart from you, and to in-'duce him to treat you with ſuch unkindneſs, as 'may ſubvert, in your mind, thoſe ſentiments of 'affection and eſteem which, next to the princi-'ples of duty and honour, form the ſtrongeſt 'guards of female purity. Nay, hear me one 'moment more. Every audacious whiſper which 'he utters againſt your huſband, every look of 'artificial tenderneſs by which he dares to re-'commend *himſelf*, are employed to batter down 'the ſame defence, while his atheiſtical inſinua-'tions tend to repreſs the compunctions of con-'ſcience, and to weaken that principle of reli-'gion upon which your ſafety principally de-'pends."

'Before you draw ſuch harſh concluſions, 'Miſs Evans,' ſaid the offended counteſs, 'you 'ſhould deſcribe what parts of my conduct will, 'in your opinion, expoſe me to the indignity of a 'licentious addreſs. I muſt alſo add, that as your 'judgment of Mr. Fitzoſborne ſeems to be too 'decided to be the mere reſult of ſuſpicion, I 'have a right to bid you *prove*, that he feels for 'me a bolder ſentiment than pity or eſteem. If 'he is what you deſcribe, inſtead of being the 'ornament of ſociety, he is its diſgrace.'

'Do recollect,' replied Lucy, 'that I give 'him credit for the deepeſt contrivance, the moſt

'profound

'profound artifice. I am not in his confidence. 'The only positive proofs which I can bring 'against him are, your present wretchedness, his 'influence both over lord Monteith and yourself, 'and his avowed infidelity.'

'You and Mr. Powerscourt have ever given 'that harsh name to a singularity of opinion 'which your candid father only *suspected* of leaning to deism. All doubt with you appears to 'be a crime, and a dissent from your notions on 'some important but mysterious point subjects 'your ill-fated opponent to the most confirmed 'imputation of the blackest guilt, even though 'his whole previous conduct evinces a course of 'almost unsinning rectitude and exemplary virtue.

'O my Geraldine! I will urge you but this 'once more. Is is from himself that you hear of 'this unsinning rectitude and shining virtue? 'His character is comparatively unknown in his 'country. Abroad it was esteemed to be far 'from immaculate. His constant associates were 'men of loose principles and profligate manners.'

'It is from Henry Powerscourt that you learned 'this catalogue of vices?" inquired Geraldine with a resentful air.

'It is,' returned Lucy. 'It is from that 'Henry Powerscourt whom we both so tenderly 'esteem; the dear companion of our early happy 'years, those years of confidence, tranquillity, 'and mutual affection. O lady Monteith! how 'exquisitely painful is that reflection now. Hear 'me yet on my bended knees; hear my solemn 'request. Mine is no display of officious zeal, 'no false colouring of a hollow heart. If I have 'erred, it is from a mistaken judgment; and

'punish

'punish me as that crime deserves. Yet, my 'ever beloved friend! do not let your confidence 'in your own discernment lead you into danger. 'It is not because I suspect your virtue that I 'thus impressively warn you; but it is because I 'consider you to be surrounded with snares which, 'without divine protection, no mortal can es-'cape; and to that protection I commend you in 'my most earnest prayers."

Vanquished by this affectionate appeal, Geraldine raised her Lucy, and folded her in her arms. The reconciliation was as sincere as it was affecting. The countess protested, that though she could not adopt her opinions of a man whom she had studied with unremitting attention, she yet gave entire credit to the sincerity of her motives; and Miss Evans hoped, that the communication, which had somewhat relieved her burdened mind, would not be entirely forgotten in the hours of calm reflection. They then parted, after mutually engaging to name this affecting subject no more.

Miss Evans's thoughts were diverted the next morning to a subject yet more poignantly distressing, and which, as the master-sorrow, swallowed up every other care. A letter from her father's house-keeper announced, that he was alarmingly ill, and requested her immediate presence at Powerscourt. This letter flung her into such violent emotions, that she had not self-command sufficient to reflect upon some very extraordinary circumstances which accompanied it. The style and the writing were greatly superior to Mrs. Mary's usual performances. This was, indeed, accounted for in the postscript, which stated, that being ashamed of her *poor scrawl*, she had got the clerk to copy it, and to rectify the spelling.

ſpelling. The excuſe was more conſpicuous than the writing; for Mrs. Mary and the clerk were not upon good terms, and it ſeemed extraordinary, that a faithful confidential ſervant ſhould think of ſuch minute explanations when a beloved maſter lay in the utmoſt danger, and requiring all her active ſervices. Where too was Henry? Was it not natural for him to write to his Lucy? and how improbable, that he ſhould permit another pen to tranſcribe his meſſage that he wiſhed her to return inſtantly! The alarm which the letter excited prevented the conſideration of theſe contradictory particulars. Miſs Evans was in the chaiſe on her return to Caernarvonſhire in half an hour after it arrived; nor was it till her anxiety for her father was relieved by finding that the whole narrative was an infamous impoſition, that ſhe began to be ſurpriſed at her own want of penetration in not *immediately* diſcovering it to be ſo. A ſtatement of this fact, which ſeemed to convey ſome freſh indications of Fitzoſborne's guilt, was immediately diſpatched to Monteith, and Henry Powerſcourt undertook to be the courier. His generous heart braved every indignity and every danger; nor could even his Lucy's apprehenſive terrors diſſuade him from defying the reſentment of a man whom ſhe believed to be capable of adding murder to his other crimes. The preſervation of his once-fondly loved, and ſtill-tenderly eſteemed Geraldine, overpowered all regard for his own perſonal ſafety. But his generous intentions were fruſtrated by the events which had happened at Monteith previous to his arrival.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

O much deceiv'd, much failing, hapleſs Eve!
Of thy preſum'd return! event perverſe!
Thou never from that hour in paradiſe
Found'ſt either ſweet repaſt or ſound repoſe;
Such ambuſh, laid among ſweet flowers and ſhades,
Waited with helliſh rancour imminent
To intercept thy way, or ſend thee back
Deſpoil'd of innocence, of faith, of bliſs!

MILTON.

THE diſtreſs of Miſs Evans for her father's ſuppoſed illneſs had given a temporary diverſion to lady Monteith's ideas; but they ſoon recurred to the contemplation of her own ſorrows. The affecting ſcene of the preceding evening, by reviving all her former tenderneſs, gave that importance to her friend's judgment of which it had been for ſome time deprived; and while ſhe recollected the impreſſive earneſtneſs and indiſputable ſincerity with which it was delivered, ſhe deemed it at leaſt entitled to attention; and ſhe determined to ſcrutinize the principles on which ſhe had founded her opinion of Fitzoſborne.

She firſt reverted to the high eſtimation in which his character was held by the world. Every one ſpoke of him as a moſt extraordinary man; and his inviolable integrity was confirmed by his behaviour on the diſcovery of lady Arabella's attachment to him. Nay, ſtrange as it might ſeem, ſhe often thought that he ſtill cheriſhed her idea in his heart. She knew that he had preſerved her

her picture, and he had juſt rejected the propoſal of an advantageous alliance with the rich heireſs of an Iſlandic chieftain. This conſtancy, though from the diſcordance of their character ſcarcely attributable to the caprices of love, proved the ſolidity of his virtue, and ſecured herſelf from even a poſſibility of being the object of his licentious paſſion. His ſpeculative notions on ſome points were indeed reprehenſible; but then they were merely ſpeculations; and ſhe ſtill thought Mr. Evans's notions, which tended to confine opinion, were deficient in liberality, and founded on a tyrannical deſire of ſubjugating the free independent mind. All her own obſervations tended to convince her, that Henry and Lucy exaggerated his errors. No direct charge was brought againſt *him*, even ſuppoſing his companions to have been as profligate as they were deſcribed. A twelvemonth's intimacy was ſome ground whereon to judge of characters; and ſhe could not help affirming, that the innocence of his conduct was a proof of the inoffenſiveneſs of his principles.

The change in lord Monteith could not, even by Lucy's own confeſſion, be *clearly* traced to his influence. The ſuſpicion that he was acceſſary to his lordſhip's faults only aroſe from the probability of his having ſome ſecret ſeducer, and the influence which Fitzoſborne ſeemed to have over him. For her own part ſhe was doubtful of the exiſtence of a ſeducer, and could not perceive any certain proof of that ſuppoſed influence.

His marked attentions to herſelf formed the next accuſation. But Lucy knew nothing of the manners of the great world, or the freedoms which cuſtom had rendered general. The univerſal homage, which even *appropriated* beauty

ty required, and the familiar intercourse to which the censorious did not affix the least shadow of impropriety, would shock her friend's notions, formed in the depth of retirement, and rather founded on the idea of what was prudent, than on the consideration of what is practicable.

Her thoughts then fell into a train of reflection upon the incidents of her early years, the peaceful shades of Powerscourt, the joyous hours of playful gaiety, the endearing recollection of tender confidence, and interesting simplicity, all rendered still more exquisite by the vivid glow of youthful hope, which spread a more fascinating splendour round the present scene, by the promise of more brilliant future enjoyments. Fallacious promise! falsified prediction! "Is there," said she, casting her eyes from the proud heights of Monteith castle on the subject vale; "is there in 'all this wide domain a wretch more miserable 'than me?"

She started at that recollection. 'Yes, there 'are. *There* exists pining penury; *there* destitute sickness suffers, and wasting infancy declines; not only deprived of the assistance 'which former experience prompted them to expect from their lord, but even refused what justice determines to be their own. O Fitzosborne! 'how strongly do such situations demonstrate the 'truth of your opinion, that the present order of 'things requires the bold hand of some intelligent reformer!"

Leaving lady Monteith's conclusion to disprove itself, I proceed with my narrative. She walked to the cabinet which stood in her dressing-room, and, opening the casket which contained her mother's jewels, she determined to divert them from the service of ostentation and vanity to the

the nobler purpoſes of benevolence and integrity. She looked over, without a ſigh, the various articles of ornament; but her mother's picture, ſet round with diamonds, excited a ſtrong repugnance. It had been preſented to one of her ſiſters, and reſtored to the Powerſcourt family, on the death of its owner. Lady Monteith attentively contemplated the features. 'Thou art at 'reſt,' ſaid ſhe; 'would I were ſo too. Thou 'didſt endure ſevere bodily ſuffering; mine are 'the ſharper tortures of the mind. The neglect 'of an eſtranged huſband never rived thy heart!'

She then began a letter to a friend at Edinburgh, whom ſhe wiſhed to employ as an agent in this buſineſs. The difficulty of aſſigning a motive for this action, and the ſuſpicious ſecreſy that ſhe was forced to require, made her incapable of executing it to her ſatisfaction, though ſhe made repeated attempts. 'It will certainly 'be diſcovered,' ſaid ſhe. 'If it ſhould come to 'my father's knowledge, it might diſpleaſe, it 'muſt diſtreſs him. To whom but him ſhould 'I apply for aſſiſtance? Ah! hard neceſſity! that 'I alone cannot ſolicit the bounty of his ever 'liberal hand!"

Tear after tear flowed down her cheek, when the ſound of Fitzoſborne's foot upon the ſtairs rouſed her from the ſtupor of grief. 'He ſhall 'not ſee me in this diſorder. Lucy ſhall not re-'proach me with having a *male* confidant.' She haſtily ſnatched up her papers, and retired to her own chamber. Her expedition was too much the effect of agitation to admit of exactneſs, and ſhe left behind her a part of a letter which, with her jewels lying upon the table, were ſufficient to inform Fitzoſborne of the nature of her recent occupation. He immediately incloſed bank-notes for four

four hundred pounds, which ſeemed to be the required ſum, and addreſſed to lady Monteith a few reſpectful lines, in which he entreated her to permit him to enjoy a luxury ſeldom annexed to humble fortunes, by appropriating what was to him an incumbrance to thoſe noble offices, to which he durſt affirm ſhe had deſtined the value of her jewels. He then ſealed the note and retired.

Lady Monteith only waited to hear him quit the room to leave her retreat. She read the paper, which was addreſſed to her, and though ſhe ſteadily determined to reject the incloſed preſent, ſhe felt enraptured at the generoſity which proffered the gift, and at the delicacy which ſo inſinuatingly ſued for its acceptance. The reader will not partake in her feelings, when informed, that juſtice would have *ordered* the reſtitution of this property to the Monteith family, it being only a *part* of a larger ſum which had been tranſmitted to Fitzoſborne by a right honourable *rook* of his acquaintance, as a douceur for the favour of being permitted to have the principal plucking of the fineſt *pigeon* that had been for many years brought to market.

Ignorant of the nature of the 'accurſed ſpoil,' the counteſs remained ſteady in her reſolution of returning it. In vain did Edward attempt to reſiſt her determination. 'My pecuniary difficul-
'ties,' ſaid ſhe, 'are not ſo diſtreſſing as to per-
'mit me to ſequeſter the ſlender portion of a
'younger brother.'

'Recollect,' replied Fitzoſborne, 'that the
'influence of lord Monteith has permitted me to
'extend my hopes beyond the narrow ſphere of
'a younger brother's enjoyments, and do not
'check the impulſe of gratitude.'

'Then

'Then to lord Monteith be the recompenſe 'made.'

'And why not to his charming wife? I ſhould 'admire this lovely pride. did I not ſuſpect that 'it was united to a degree of ſuſpicion, unworthy 'of your purity and my own honour. Can I no 'way convince you of my ſincere diſintereſted 'friendſhip? Can I make no offers which will 'not be diſdainfully refuſed?'

'Yes, certainly you may,' replied the counteſs; 'and I will depute you, inſtead of my 'Edinburgh friend, to diſpoſe of theſe jewels. 'Faſhion varies ſo much, and people in the 'country dreſs ſo plain, that I ſcarcely ever want 'ſuch ornaments. Beſide, lord Monteith was 'remarkably liberal on my marriage. They re-'ally are not of the ſmalleſt uſe to me.'

'I willingly undertake the commiſſion,' returned Fitzoſborne; 'but it may be ſome time be-'fore I can find a purchaſer; and why ſhould this 'money lie uſeleſs in my ſecretary? Are the objects 'of your bounty (for I know it is not extrava-'gance, but generoſity, which limits your re-'ſources) to languiſh to an uncertain period? 'Why may I not advance it by way of loan? 'Indeed, lady Monteith! you are too ſcrupu-'lous.'

'I believe,' ſaid ſhe recollecting herſelf, 'I 'am. I will accept your offer. The jewels 'will, I am confident, diſcharge the debt; and 'pray never expect me to redeem them.'

This buſineſs being adjuſted, a momentary pauſe enſued. 'We exceedingly regret,'' ob-'ſerved Fitzoſborne, the loſs of our cheerful 'companion Miſs Evans. I hope ſhe will find 'her father better.' The counteſs ſincerely joined in that wiſh.

'She

'She was the life of our party,' continued Edward. 'My lord is quite miſerable at her go-
'ing. He declares that he never met with a
'woman whoſe manner ſo much entertained
'him; all vivacity and ſpirit; and certainly ſhe
'was aſſiduouſly attentive and obliging to his
'lordſhip.

'She is generally obliging to every one,' replied the counteſs. 'But I think you ſometimes
'experienced rather a ſevere bon mot.'

'O, I don't doubt that my impertinence de-
'ſerved it; and it was of no conſequence to
'me, ſo ſhe kept lord Monteith in good hu-
'mour.'

Fitzoſborne's remarks were never without meaning; and the moſt candid tempers, when rouſed to ſuſpicion, are ever the moſt watchful. 'Does he', thought the perplexed Geraldine, 'mean to inſinuate that ſhe was improperly at-
'tentive to my lord? She is deſtitute of vanity,
'and infinitely ſuperior to every ſiniſter deſign.
'If ſhe was more pointed in her civilities, it
'muſt have been from her conviction that I
'failed in paying him due obſervance; and ſhe
'ſtrove to ſupply my deficiency. Alas! even
'my boſom-friend condemns me. Even my
'Lucy will not allow how difficult it is for an in-
'jured heart to be at once affectionate and ſin-
'cere, to diſguiſe the bitter feeling which un-
'kindneſs calls forth, under a forced ſmile that
'has loſt the power of pleaſing.'

This inference was exactly what Edward wiſhed her to draw. He had for ſome time attempted to revive the flame of jealouſy in lady Monteith's boſom; but it was not in the chaſte ſimplicity of Miſs Evans's manner that he hoped to find materials to feed the fire. It was ſufficient

for

for him, that Geraldine ſhould think her friend cenſorious and partial; another object had long ſince been fixed upon to effect the conſummation of Fitzoſborne's treacherous devices.

Among lord Monteith's tenants was a young woman, the daughter of a farmer, highly graced by the charms of natural beauty, and not leſs diſtinguiſhed by a levity of manner, and a faſhionable arrangement of dreſs, extremely diſſimilar to the plain attire and ſober demeanour of the neighbours in her rank of life. Theſe circumſtances, though perhaps only the reſult of folly and inconſideration, or at the worſt unſuſpicious vanity, the uncommon beauty of the girl forced into attention; and even at the caſtle, when better ſubjects were exhauſted, the perſon, the finery, and the flirtations of Pattie Thompſon formed an occaſional theme for converſation. Geraldine had been frequently diverted by her awkward, yet not diſguſting imitation of her own dreſs and manners; and on Fitzoſborne's firſt arrival at Monteith, ſhe pointed her out as a figure very likely to attract general attention if ſeen in Groſvenor-ſquare or Hyde-park. Edward gazed a few moments, gave an exclamation of ſurprize, and then whiſpered her, that ſhe was the exact likeneſs of Mrs. Harley.

From that moment the counteſs turned her eyes from the blooming Pattie with an involuntary ſhudder of horror; and when ſhe invited the rural laſſes to a dance in the caſtle in honour of one of her daughter's birth-days, ſhe was ſecretly pleaſed that Farmer Thompſon's daughter could not be of the party. Even her viſits at the old man's houſe were leſs frequent than thoſe which ſhe made to her other neighbours. She felt herſelf wrong, and ſhe determined to make

make a painful effort to be right. She ſet out accordingly, and had nearly reached the dwelling, when ſhe ſaw lord Monteith walking haſtily towards it by another road. The diſcovery was of itſelf ſufficiently agitating, but Fitzoſborne, as uſual, pointed the dart more directly to her peace of mind by the ſudden exclamation of 'Good Heaven!' He left her inſtantly, flew to the earl, and, ſeizing him by the arm, with a degree of violent geſticulation, walked back with him to the caſtle.

The viſit of the counteſs was ſhort, and her manner was ungracious. She returned home, and, pleading that the walk had overcome her, ſhe continued confined to her chamber the remainder of the day. However poignant her feelings, ſhe never diſcloſed them even to her Lucy, who was then at Monteith. But ſhe had continued to brood over this really accidental circumſtance in ſecret till the time of which I am now treating. If it ſhould here be objected to my narrative, that chance had too conſiderable a ſhare in the ſucceſs of Fitzoſborne to give probability to the ſimilar deſigns of another villain, let inexperience and ſelf-confidence remember, that a determined ſeducer, admitted to an equal degree of intimacy, will always find in the domeſtic events of every family equal opportunities of expediting his views. The moſt ſubtile genius cannot preconcert every operation. It is in the directing ſkill by which incidental circumſtances are made to conduce to one great deſign, that the power of ſuperior ability is moſt eminently viſible.

Fitzoſborne, now conceiving the mine to be fully delved, determined on the immediate exploſion. He was conſcious that a diſcovery was impending;

impending; and when he conſidered the magnitude and the intricacy of his plots, he felt aſtoniſhed at his own good fortune in having ſo long eſcaped detection. To triſle with danger was now folly.

My readers have doubtleſs aſcribed to him the letter which hurried Miſs Evans to Caernarvonſhire, as they will eaſily conceive that her preſence was an inſuperable obſtacle to the completion of his iniquity. I muſt now inform them, that by repeated bribes he had ſeduced the fidelity of lord Monteith's butler, and the groom who generally accompanied him on horſeback. They regularly gave him information of every event that happened in the family. His appearance in the library, and the opening of the banqueting-room door on the night lady Monteith went down ſtairs to ſpeak to the ſteward, were not accidental. The watchfulneſs of Miſs Evans checked the audacious hopes which he had that evening dared to form from the extreme diſtreſs which reſentment had enkindled in lady Monteith's mind againſt the degrading conduct of her lord. But Miſs Evans was now far diſtant; the faithful conſcientious ſteward had ſet out for Edinburgh to tranſact ſome money affairs; and lord Monteith was wholly engroſſed by the ſhooting ſeaſon, which had juſt commenced.

The third morning after Miſs Evans's departure, my lord was abſent at breakfaſt; but that was not uncommon. Fitzoſborne read ſome of Wieland's works to the counteſs, commented on the beautiful deſcriptions, and then propoſed a walk. They went through the plantations to the lake. On the road ſhe enlarged, with affecting ſimplicity, on the pleaſure which ſhe once

once enjoyed in adding a finiſhing grace to the richneſs of that ſtriking ſcenery; and a tear ſtole down her cheek, as ſhe pointed out parts which her lord had *uſed* to commend. Fitzoſborne's replies were calculated to confirm her apprehenſion that ſhe muſt now turn her mind to different objects; for that the pleaſures of connubial eſteem and confidence were loſt for ever. On their way home they paſſed near Farmer Thompſon's. Fitzoſborne propoſed calling, but the counteſs, pleading wearineſs, declined going out of her way, and reſted upon a ſtile, while Edward went, as he ſaid, to pleaſe himſelf with the ſight of a pretty girl. He returned thoughtful and diſconcerted, and obſerved gravely that ſhe was not at home.

Dinner was ſerved ſoon after their return, but no one could find lord Monteith. 'This is ve-'ry extraordinary,' ſaid the counteſs. 'He 'uſed to be remarkably punctual. Who went 'with him?'

'My lord took no ſervant,' was the butler's reply.

Geraldine felt alarmed: 'Sure no accident 'has happened. Call my lord's groom.' He was queſtioned reſpecting the ſafety of his horſe, and the counteſs was now informed that he was not gone out upon any of his own horſes.

'Search the woods immediately. Some 'dreadful event muſt have detained him. He 'never would go far from home on foot, and 'unattended. Had he a gun with him?' The groom now owned in ſome confuſion, that his maſter had ſet off early that morning in a hired chaiſe and four.

'Do none of you know which road he took?' The ſervants were divided in their opinions. The

The greater part ſaid, he went towards the moors, but the butler and the groom declared that they ſaw the chaiſe turn round by the lodges in the park, as if it was going to Farmer Thompſon's, and then, after having ſtopped for a moment, proceeded towards Edinburgh.

Geraldine now trembled with undefined diſtreſs. 'Did you,' ſaid ſhe to Fitzoſborne, 'know nothing of this journey?'

He ordered the ſervants to retire, and then ſaid, 'He confides none of *theſe* ſecrets to me. I only know that his affairs are deſperate; but 'before I mention my further ſuſpicions, allow 'me to aſcertain their validity. I will juſt run 'to Farmer Thompſon's. For heaven's ſake! 'be compoſed. I will ſoon be back. Shall I 'ſend your children to you?"

'No! no! fly! fly!' was all ſhe could articulate.

He ſoon returned, and the tale he told corroborated in every particular the butler's account. Pattie Thompſon was ſeen in a chaiſe with a gentleman, wrapped in a riding-coat, at ſix o'clock that morning. The counteſs fainted.

The tiger who ſports with the victim that he holds in his fangs, is not ſuſpected to feel compaſſion; nor did the tender epithets which Fitzoſborne addreſſed to the object of his more ſavage cruelty indicate a relenting heart. He wiſhed, indeed, to recal her ſenſes; but it was only that ſhe might feel the torments of guilt added to thoſe of miſery.

No ſooner did he perceive returning life faintly fluſh upon her cheek, and her ſcarcely-opened eyes fixed upon him with a look at once expreſſive of confidence and deſpair, than he determined

termined to confirm that despair, and to abuse that confidence.

'Where shall I go? What shall I do?' inquired the distressed Geraldine.

'I know not what to advise. You cannot 'stay at Monteith. The creditors will certainly 'hear of the earl's departure——'

'Cannot stay!—why?'

'An execution will be immediately served.'

'O my helpless, houseless babes!—where 'shall I shelter *them*?"

'Surely your propereſt asylum will be with 'your father.'

'True. O! let me fly to Powerscourt.'

'Yet consider his years and infirmities. Will 'there not be some danger in pouring upon 'him, while unprepared, the whole weight of 'your calamities; of afflicting him with your 'distress before you have learnt fortitude to 'endure it. Cannot you be for a little time at 'the Evans's?

'My Lucy is already sinking with her own 'sorrow. Ought I to increase it?'

'Permit me then, ever loved and respected 'lady Monteith, to propose another asylum. I 'have a sister, a woman of the most unblemish-'ed character, who will esteem it an honour to 'protect you. Allow me to conduct you and 'your children to her. She lives in Lanca-'shire.'

'No! Fitzosborne. I must not take refuge 'with *your* friends.'

'I can name no other sanctuary, unless it be 'lady Arabella Macdonald's house. And surely 'calumny itself must approve of your taking 'refuge there.'

'I can-

'I cannot apply for protection to lady Ara-
'bella. She will be severe, and make me feel
'the pang of dependance.'

'You are then unacquainted with the influ-
'ence which I have happily regained over her
'sentiments. But I recollect, that, engrossed
'by your sorrows I have omitted to announce
'my own brightening prospects.'

He then drew from his pocket a letter which strongly resembled the writing, and still more the style, of lady Arabella. It was addressed to the Honourable Edward Fitzosborne.

'SIR,

'I really do feel so excessively disconcerted,
'that I hardly know in what style to begin. For
'one hates to own oneself wrong, and yet I
'think I ought to tell you that I have been un-
'der some little mistake: and not chusing to
'be upon bad terms with a gentleman so vastly
'well spoken of, and received, every where, I
'just add, that I shall be very glad to see you at
'my parties when you come to London. I
'hope this concession will satisfy lord Mon-
'teith, to whom and his sweet Geraldine I beg
'my tender regards, and remain, sir, with sin-
'cere esteem,

'Your very obedient servant,

'ARABELLA MACDONALD.'

'Shall I then throw myself at her feet? and
'ask her to protect me and my children; to
'save us from want; to soften the pangs of
'perfidy at least, till I can gently prepare my
'father?' inquired the afflicted Geraldine.

'I would adviſe, that you ſhould not only do 'ſo, but that you ſhould ſet off immediately. A 'thought has juſt ſtruck me. You may over-'take lord Monteith. He has certainly taken 'the road to London.'

'What? with that unfortunate girl? O, 'Fitzoſborne! a wife is bound by indiſſoluble 'ties, and muſt ſuffer with him; but how could 'he be ſo cruel, ſo ſelfiſh, to involve a ſtranger 'in his calamities? She was innocent, happy, 'bleſſed with humble competence.'

'Your candour has miſled you. I have cer-'tain proof that a criminal connection has ſub-'ſiſted ſome time between them. She proba-'bly propoſes to accompany lord Monteith 'abroad.'

'Abroad! Is he going abroad? What! ab-'ſolutely deſert me and my little ones without 'one preparatory word? Leave me too in all 'theſe complicated circumſtances of grief and 'diſtreſs? Oh! hold my brain, or let me 'loſe reflection in inſtant madneſs. Unparal-'lelled! unpardonable cruelty!'

'It is indeed unpardonable. Monteith, the 'execrable Monteith, is unworthy of you.'

'May the anguiſh which I ſuffer, Fitzoſborne, 'warn you of the danger of a precipitate choice! 'Let not your eye miſlead your judgment, nor 'your fancy cheat you with the ſemblance of 'non-exiſting virtues.'

'My heart, moſt charming moraliſt, is for 'ever fixed where my judgment has diſcovered 'the moſt unqueſtionable excellence. Yet do 'not droop beneath your ſorrow. The tyrant 'laws of cuſtom will not for ever bind you to 'the mean deſpicable ſeducer of a ſimple ruſtic,

the

'the depraved aſſociate of a hireling proſti-
'tute.'

'True. But my children. O! for their ſakes
'what would I not ſubmit to? I would ſtill en-
'dure his contempt. I would kneel, and hum-
'bly ſupplicate to be the partner in all *their*
'father's fortunes.'

Fitzoſborne pauſed. 'No injuries, I ſee, can
'compel her to a willing elopement. It is well;
'I have a reſource. I know that I poſſeſs her
'affections; and women always pardon where
'they love.'

'If ſuch be your reſolution,' ſaid he to the half-frantic Geraldine, "let me inſtantly order
'your carriage, that you may ſet off in purſuit
'of him. Every moment's delay increaſes the
'difficulty of overtaking him.'

'True. I will be gone. You are my better
'angel, Fitzoſborne. Order my carriage, while
'I fetch my little ones. They ſhall kneel with
'me to their faithleſs father.'

'Deareſt lady Monteith,' returned Fitzoſborne, infernal triumph ſparkling in his eyes,
'how diſtreſs affects your ſtrong intellects! At
'this late hour, their ſeaſon of reſt, would you
'expoſe their delicate frames to the danger of a
'rapid purſuit? Conſider, that all your hopes
'of overtaking lord Monteith depend upon your
'ſpeed. If you are ſucceſsful, your own
'charms, and your deep diſtreſs, muſt poſſeſs
'ſufficient eloquence; and if you are ſo unfor-
'tunate as to miſs him, will it be acting with
'proper decorum to lady Arabella to obtrude
'your family upon her without previous prepa-
'ration?'

'Am I then to leave them here, the ſport of
'mercileſs creditors?'

'Reſt

'Reſt aſſured, madam, that however barbar-
'ous our laws may be, in that particular, the
'execution of them is happily conducted with
'urbanity, at leaſt to people of your rank. But,
'to ſoften my apprehenſion on their account,
'I will take care to eſcort them wherever you
'pleaſe to order, when you are placed in ho-
'norable protection. Their nurſes are very
'careful of them; they are too young to know
'ſorrow by anticipation; and any tale will ac-
'count for your abſence.'

'Is the carriage ready? where is Maria?'

'She and my ſervant are packing up a few
'neceſſary changes of linen. They can follow
'us in another chaiſe.'

'*Us*, Fitzoſborne? You do not mean to go
'with me?'

'On that head I muſt be firm. Humanity
'will not ſuffer me to let you undertake ſuch a
'journey by yourſelf in circumſtances of ſuch
'peculiar diſtreſs. Beſide, if you ſhould over-
'take Monteith upon the road, who knows but
'that his violence, aggravated by detected guilt,
'may make you want a protector.'

'What bloody ſcenes are you revolving?
'Loſt, unhappy Geraldine! Better periſh here
'than want a protector againſt thy huſband.'

'He has abjured the feelings annexed to that
'title. Though I renounce the name of his
'friend, and cancel all ties of gratitude, yet for
'your ſake you ſhall ſee me calm and diſpaſſio-
'nate, nay even patient of inſult. But you forget
'how we waſte theſe precious moments.'

'Ah, true.' She ſtept towards the door; and then, ſuddenly ſtopping, exclaimed, 'Where
'are my children? I muſt ſee them once more!'

'Would

'Would you wake them from their ſleep?' cried Fitzoſborne, who dreaded the event of ſuch an interview. 'Would you fill their inno-'cent minds with ſorrow at ſeeing your diſ-'treſs?'

'Sleep on, my innocent, peaceful children; 'and never may ye know what your mother 'ſuffers!' She then turned her eyes upon Fitzoſborne. The expreſſion in his countenance excited a momentary alarm. She withdrew her hand from his impaſſioned graſp, and fearfully uttered: 'Something ſtill whiſpers me, 'that I ought not to go: at leaſt, not with you.'

'Whence this cruel diſtruſt of your adopted 'brother, the contracted huſband of your Ara-'bella?' returned the re-collected diſſembler. 'Dear lady Monteith! Will theſe ſtarts of too 'ſuſceptible delicacy never ceaſe, even if you 'ſhould ſee that engagement fulfilled?'

'Then remember,' replied ſhe, in an impreſ-ſive voice, 'that my diſtraction enfeebles my 'judgment. My brain ſeems on fire. If the 'ſtep you adviſe ſhould widen the breach be-'tween me and my lord, on you be all the 'blame.'

'May it reſt upon me for ever!' He uttered this terrible imprecation as he led his victim to the chariot. He ſtopped a moment, under pretence of giving his valet inſtructions for their route, while Geraldine, claſping her trembling hands exclaimed, 'Adieu, Monteith! perhaps eternally adieu!' The ſervants crowded into the corridor with looks of conſternation and diſtreſs. Fitzoſborne called aloud, that the other carriage ſhould follow as ſoon as poſſible, and join them at the next poſt-town. Then throwing himſelf into the chariot, the horſes ſet off full ſpeed on the Edinburgh road.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

Axylus, hoſpitable, rich, and good,
In fair Ariſba's walls (his native place)
He held his ſeat; the friend of human race.
Faſt by the road, his ever-open door
Oblig'd the wealthy, and reliev'd the poor.
Breathleſs the good man fell.

POPE'S HOMER.

MARIA ſtood in the great hall ready to attend her lady, her eyes ſwelled with tears, and her heart throbbing with ſorrow at the idea of her beloved miſtreſs's diſtreſs, when ſhe was joined by the old houſekeeper.

'Pray, Mrs. Maria,' ſaid the good woman, 'can you tell me what is the matter with her 'ladyſhip? It is ſo odd to ſet out for London 'at eight o'clock at night, and ſo late in September too. Thank God! there is a very 'good moon to be ſure, and the roads are very 'ſafe, and I wiſh you all well there with all my 'heart. But poor ſoul muſt be faint, for ſhe 'has not ate one mouthful of dinner, though I 'ſent up two courſes as nicely diſhed as ever I 'did in my life. She has had nothing within 'her lips, the footmen ſay, but one glaſs of 'ſome ſort of cordial which Mr. Fitzoſborne 'mixed up and gave her.'

'My maſter did not touch one morſel neither,' obſerved Fitzoſborne's ſervant, who now joined them.

'Your

'Your maſter, Mr. Pomade, does not do 'many things which other people think they 'ought to do. He never goes to church, nor 'ſays his prayers; and yet he pretends to be 'very good. So, if he can be good without 'going to church, or ſaying his prayers, he 'may live without eating for what I know.'

'You are rather ſevere, Mrs. Anniſeed. 'My maſter, madam, I muſt inform you, is 'one of the moſt generous, free, good-tem-'pered gentlemen in the world.'

'Very likely; I only know that my lord 'and lady were as happy as kings and queens 'before he came.'

'I wiſh,' ſaid the weeping Maria, 'that our 'chaiſe was ready.'

'Go, Sandy,' ſaid Pomade to one of the grooms, 'do juſt have the goodneſs for once 'to be expeditious; and if you will do me the 'honour of a call in town, a bottle of burgun-'dy is at your ſervice: but, *à-propos*, my dear 'Miſs Maria, ſuppoſe I have the happineſs of 'juſt drinking one glaſs of wine with you be-'fore we ſet out on our *immenſe* long expedi-'tion.'

The houſekeeper now beckoned Maria into the ſpice-room. 'Do as you pleaſe, child,' ſaid the ſagacious matron; 'but if I was you, 'I would not go to London with that random 'fop. You and I will get into the chaiſe, and 'ſay nothing to him, but go by ourſelves after 'our dear miſtreſs.'

'But he has received directions what inns 'we are to ſtop at on the road.'

'Never mind. With God's bleſſing, we 'ſhall find her as well without him as with him, 'I dare ſay. Ah Maria! Maria! there is no

'good abroad, I fear. Heaven preſerve her 'ladyſhip is all I ſay.'

One of the ſtable-boys now entered to ſay, that, as my lord's groom was putting the horſes into the travelling poſtchaiſe, one of them had turned reſtive, and had kicked the ſhafts all to pieces.

'Then harneſs out my lord's,' exclaimed Maria.'

'That's impoſſible; for the coachman is 'gone with it to Stirling to be mended.'

'Then I will have the coach.'

'What? ſend the new coach twelve miles 'in the night? No! Maſter Sandy dare not 'do that, I know. Why, the coachman would 'have us both turned off directly.'

'Then pray, William, let me have the 'curricle.'

'No,' ſaid the houſekeeper; 'I won't have 'my bones broke in the curricle; but I can 'ride double very well. Have the two ſaddle 'horſes got ready directly.'

A ſhout of ridicule was now raiſed againſt the houſekeeper by Mr. Pomade, who came to condole with Maria upon his misfortune in not having the pleaſure of travelling with her that evening. 'We muſt defer our expedition, 'my dear,' ſaid he, 'till morning's early ray; 'and I proteſt, but for the loſs of your charm-'ing company, I ſhould be glad; for I find the 'thick mountain fog very pernicious to my 'lungs, which ſuffered extremely in croſſing 'the Alps when I came out of Italy. Mr. 'Fitzoſborne has too much friendſhip for me to 'be diſpleaſed at my not expoſing myſelf to 'the night air.'

'I will

'I will follow my lady,' ſaid Maria, 'if I go 'on foot.'

'You will be very likely to be ſure to over-'take her, who has ſet out an hour before you 'in a chariot and four. No! come, as it is 'utterly impoſſible for us to proceed, let us 'embrace my good friend the butler's propoſal, 'and have a little feſtival. He has promiſed 'us plenty of excellent champagne; and I re-'queſt Miſs Maria's hand for the ball. Nay! 'my dear creature, why do you cry ſo? Lady 'Monteith will be vaſtly well taken care of, I 'dare ſay. 'Pon my ſoul! I ſhall begin to be 'ſcandalous, if you take on ſo, and ſay, that 'though her ladyſhip looks like an angel, ſhe 'is a devil of a termagant.'

'I don't know what your maſter looks like; 'but I could tell you what he is, if I choſe it,' 'ſaid the houſe-keeper: 'but it is not my 'way to be uncivil to any body." Her mode-ration, however, continued no longer than till ſhe heard that the riding-horſes were all looſe in the Park, and that the groom had fatigued himſelf to no purpoſe in endeavouring to catch them. She now poured upon Fitzoſborne a thouſand execrations; and, without paying the leaſt attention to the excuſes, which ſtrove to perſuade her that theſe misfortunes were merely the effect of chance, her paſſion and Maria's tears became ſo troubleſome, that the butler, to pacify them, promiſed to walk to the next poſt-town, and to order a hired chaiſe immediately.

He did walk; but it was only to the watch-tower, where he, Mr. Pomade, and the perfidious groom, ſpent a riotous evening, exulting in the triumph of wickedneſs, and anticipating

their

their promiſed reward, while the reſt of the family exhibited a ſcene of diſtraction.

The morning roſe, but not to bring conſolation. The obſtacles to Maria's following her lady multiplied every hour. Indeed, that faithful girl was now incapable of taking the journey. She had been in ſtrong hyſterics moſt part of the night; and the venerable houſekeeper, though ſhe alternately blamed, pitied, and commended her affectionate fellow-ſervant, had now ſo exhauſted her own feeble ſtrength, that ſhe was unequal to any further exertion.

About two o'clock a carriage drove into the caſtle-yard, and was welcomed by the univerſal ſhout of, 'Thank God! it is either my lord or 'my lady.' It was neither. Henry Powerſcourt arrived, but unhappily one day too late to ſave the honour, and ultimately the life of Geraldine.

'Where is lady Monteith?' was his firſt inquiry. 'Gone.'—'Whither?' No one knew.—'With whom?"—Mr. Fitzoſborne.'

Henry reeled againſt the portal, clapped his hand to his forehead, and was ſpeechleſs.

The ſervants crowded round him. A burſt of tears relieved his manly ſorrow. He then inquired, 'Where is my lord?'—'Gone too.' —'What, in purſuit of the counteſs?'—No! they believed her ladyſhip was gone after him.

'This is villany of a deeper caſt,' reſumed Henry. 'She is the victim of fraud, not of 'perſuaſion.'

The houſekeeper was by this time got into the hall, eager to aſk his opinion, or to receive his inſtructions. And the pale trembling Maria, hearing that Mr. Powerſcourt knew what

what was become of her lady, had dragged her feeble frame to hear the desired tidings.

'Heaven bless you! my good sir,' said the housekeeper. 'If you had but come a little 'sooner, it would not have been so.' Henry now inquired the particulars, which were recounted as intelligibly as twenty different voices could detail them. In one point they all agreed, that their lady seemed in the greatest distress.

'Ah, betrayed innocent!" exclaimed Henry. 'And is my lord's journey a secret too?'

'A most profound one, sir,' said the butler.

'He went, you say, in a hired chaise and 'four, at six o'clock yesterday morning, the 'road toward the Moors?'

'I do, sir.' replied the groom.

'Nay now, Sandy,' said one of the footmen, 'that is little better than a lie; I said so, and 'you told my lady, when she seemed so frightened about him, that you saw the chaise turn 'by the lodges in the park, and then stop, and 'go back again toward Edinburgh.'

'Did not you think so too, Mr. Thomas?' said the groom, addressing the butler.

'Why, my eyes might deceive me, but Mr. 'Pomade thought the same.'

'Who is Mr. Pomade?'

'Mr. Fitzosborne's servant.'

'Call him. He may possibly throw some 'light on this inexplicable business.'

'He went off to London at four o'clock this 'morning,' answered the groom.

"How?"—'On horseback.'

'Another lie,' exclaimed the housekeeper. 'O, there are some wicked doings, and it will 'all come out. The very stones in the street 'will speak when there has been a murder.

'His

'His maſter has got no horſes, and you told 'us that you could not catch any of my lord's, 'if we would give you a thouſand pounds.'

'Do I,' ſaid Powerſcourt, 'ſee around me 'ſo many ſtout healthy men, fed by lord Mon-'teith's bounty; and would none of them walk 'to —— to order a chaiſe, that this young 'woman might have accompanied her miſ-'treſs?'

A general murmur announced that they would all have willingly walked to Johnny Groat's houſe to ſerve their lord or their lady, but the butler had undertaken that office.

'And why did he not perform it then?' ſaid Powerſcourt. 'I ſtopped at that town my-'ſelf two hours ago, and I am confident, not 'only that there are chaiſes to be procured, 'but alſo that no meſſenger from Monteith had 'been to order one.'

The butler attempted an excuſe; but the groom, falling upon his knees, ſaid, he would confeſs all. Mr. Fitzoſborne had long deſigned to run away with his lady when he had an opportunity. His lordſhip received a note on the evening before her departure, after his lady was gone to bed, giving him an invitation to go to ſhoot ſome moor-game on the neighbouring mountains with ſome gentlemen of his acquaintance; and, propoſing to ſet off ſoon in the morning, he left a note for his lady, telling her where he was gone. He confeſſed too, that he had told Mr. Fitzoſborne this, and alſo that he was gone in a hired chaiſe on account of the bad roads, and without any attendants, for gentlemen did not like to have any more with them on the mountains than were abſolutely neceſſary. That Fitzoſborne then took

the

the note from him, and bade him ſay, if he was queſtioned, that he went round by Farmer Thompſon's, and then turned toward Edinburgh.

Influenced by a ſudden ſtart of indignation. Henry ordered both the groom and the butler into cuſtody, without conſidering that the blackeſt crimes will ſometimes evade the puniſhment of *human* laws. He now pauſed a moment to conſider how he ſhould act, when the head nurſe thus interrupted his muſings:

'Won't you ſee the pretty little dears, ſir? 'Alas-a-day! what is to become of them? 'They have been aſking for their mamma all 'the morning. Lady Bell and lady Lucy have 'ſat and learned the leſſons ſhe gave them 'yeſterday, like two angels; and they ſay that 'they know ſhe will call them good girls, and 'kiſs them, when ſhe comes: and that dear 'beautiful little creature Geraldine has made 'up a noſegay for mam-mam. She can hardly 'talk, you know. Dear ſweet ſouls! to have 'their mother taken from them. So young 'too! Do, good ſir, juſt go and ſee them. 'My little lord is vaſtly grown, even ſince you 'went away, and crows, and is ſo merry!'

Henry ſuffered himſelf to be led to the nurſery. The ſcene overpowered his fortitude. 'O, couſin Harry!' echoed the two elder, 'we are ſo glad you are come again.'—'Do,' continued Arabella, 'tell mamma we are ready 'with our books. Is not ſhe well, that ſhe 'has not been to ſee us this morning? nurſe 'does cry ſo, and ſhe won't tell us why.'

'Were all thy drops of blood lives, Fitz-'oſborne!' exclaimed Henry, 'thy crimes de-'mand the forfeiture of all. Villain! mon-

'ſtrous

'ſtrous infernal villain! to ſacrifice to ſenſual 'paſſion the peace, the welfare, the reputation 'of innocents like theſe!'

'My dear little ladies,' cried the nurſe to the terrified children, 'naughty Mr. Fitzoſ-'borne has took your mamma away; but if 'you will be very good, and not cry, this good 'gentleman will fetch her back again.'

'Yes, indeed, I will be very good,' ſaid the ſobbing lady Arabella, 'and not cry, if I can 'help it. Pray, Lucy, don't hold couſin 'Harry's coat; conſider you will hinder him; 'and when you find mamma, couſin, tell her 'ſhe ſhall not ſee us cry when ſhe comes home 'again.'

Henry caught the children alternately in his arms, and while his heart yearned at their misfortune, he commended their deſerted innocence to the common Parent of the orphan and the diſtreſſed. He at length tore himſelf from the affecting ſcene.

He now debated which way to ſhape his courſe: whether to ſet off in purſuit of the counteſs, or to communicate the intelligence of her abſence to lord Monteith, and to conſult with him what meaſures ſhould be adopted. Every circumſtance proved that ſhe had been rather entrapped than ſeduced. A hope ſtruck him, that his reſcue might come in time to ſave her from diſhonour, and he ſet out rapidly in ſearch of her.

He ſtopped at all the poſt inns on the route to Edinburgh; but his minute inquiries obtained no ſatisfaction. In that city he renewed his ſcrutiny; and when his failing hopes had almoſt deſerted him, he obtained what he thought a guiding clue. It proved evaſive. Still, however,

ever, convinced in his own mind, that London would be the place of Fitzosborne's destination, as being best suited for the purposes of concealment, he continued to travel towards the south, till he accidently saw a tenant of sir Willam Powerscourt's at an inn door, where he was changing horses. Anxiety for his Lucy induced him to inquire after her welfare. The honest rustic mournfully shook his head. 'Ah! 'sir,' said he, 'all is well at the parsonage; but 'very bad news at the manor-house. Our 'good old master has heard that the lady coun-'tess his daughter ran away with a fine London 'squire; and it has thrown the gout into his 'stomach, and they doubt he won't get over 'it. There's not a dry eye within ten miles of 'him by this time. I told all the folks I met 'as I came along, and they all began to pray 'for him, and to drink to his getting well. 'And they do so curse my lady countess. For 'my part, sir, I can't curse her; for I don't 'think it true; do you? She was the prettiest, 'decentest young lady I ever saw in my life, 'when she was with us; but they do say this 'London 'squire was an eternal great rogue.'

Henry lifted up his eyes to heaven, as if requiring the tardy lightning to blast Fitzosborne's complicated guilt. He now turned his course westward, and arrived at Powerscourt late the ensuing day, worn down by fatigue and anxiety. He had, however, the satisfaction to hear, that sir William was still alive, and he learnt the following particulars from Mr. Evens.

The news of lady Monteith's elopement had travelled to Powerscourt with inconceivable celerity. A dependent of the earl's, more grateful than judicious in his intentions, had

persuaded

perſuaded himſelf, that a mighty noiſe was made about nothing at all; for that the lady was only gone to ſtay a little with her father, as his wife would ſometimes do, when he had a word or two with her. He determined therefore to ride poſt to Caernarvonſhire, not doubting that he ſhould bring news back of her being ſafe and well. His uncouth manner, and confuſed extravagant account rather amuſed than alarmed the ſervants, and it was accidentally communicated to ſir William. Nothing reſpecting his darling child was unintereſting to him. He ordered the "bonnie Scot" into his preſence; and though he gave little credence to the improbable narrative, he heard with concern, that lord Monteith's affairs were in a bad ſtate, and that he and his lady were thought not to be quite ſo happy as they were.

Sir William paſſed a reſtleſs miſerable night, and the next morning appeared ſeriouſly ill. He roſe, however, with the determination of going himſelf into Scotland, when an expreſs arrived from lord Monteith, which proclaimed his own diſgrace in terms of the moſt raſh ſeverity; and haſtened the criſis of ſir William's diſorder. He was immediately ſeized with ſpaſms in his ſtomach, and, though ſomewhat relieved by medical aid, he ſtill remained ſpeechleſs, and in a very alarming ſtate.

'He is perfectly ſenſible,' continued Mr. Evans, 'and his countenance is inconceivably 'intereſting. I never ſaw ſo much meek ſor-'row ſilently expreſſed. I am confident, that 'his frame of mind is ſuch as his life would 'warrant us to expect, and that he bleſſes the 'Power that corrects him. I have juſt been at 'prayers by his bed-ſide. He preſſed my hand when

'when I had finiſhed; looked at the portrait
'of his daughter, which hung at his bed's feet,
'then on me; and laſtly raiſed his eyes to
'Heaven. I underſtood that he commended
'her to me. The ligature, as Sterne obſerves,
'fine as it is, ſhall never be broken. When
'the world forſakes her, I will receive and
'cheriſh the mourner. She may be frail and
'criminal; ſhe cannot be wholly abandoned."

Lucy now, having heard of Henry's return, ruſhed into the room with inquiries reſpecting her friend. She liſtened with breathleſs eagerneſs to the narrative which he related. 'Tis 'as I ſaid,' exclaimed ſhe, claſping her hands: 'I knew that her pure elevated mind could 'never yield conſent to an adulterous elope-'ment. O Henry! do follow her to London '—the traitor has certainly concealed her 'there;—reſcue her from him;—fear not his 'oppoſition—guilt like his muſt be cowardly: '—perhaps even yet you may ſave our Geral-'dine.'

'Let us ſtudy moderation in every thing,' replied Mr. Evans in his uſual dignified manner; 'whether we grieve for the reſpectable 'friend who ſeems leaving us for a happier 'world, or ſeek to aſſiſt the dear lady who ap-'peared to be worthy of a better fate. Let us 'ever remember, that exceſs offends. Do not 'you ſee, my dear child, that Mr. Powerſcourt 'is exhauſted by diſtreſs, and the fatigue of 'ſeven days' inceſſant travelling. We have no 'clue to direct us where to find the loſt coun-'teſs. Inſtead, therefore, of wearing out his 'ſtrength in impatient romantic wandering, let 'him reſerve it, till ſome certain intelligence 'calls us forth to action; and if *I* can ſerve

'the

'the child of my benefactor, neither my age nor 'my function ſhall be pleaded in my excuſe. In 'the mean time we will conſole ourſelves with 'the conviction, that Fitzoſborne cannot ſecrete 'her from the ſuperintendance of Omnipotence; 'and we will confide her to the care of that Pro-'vidence which never deſerts thoſe who, ſenſible 'of their own weakneſs and the perils by which 'they are ſurrounded, ſanctify the meaſures 'which human prudence ſuggeſts by a depend-'upon him who is able to ſave." The weeping Lucy acquieſced in the piety and the wiſdom of this reflection.'

Affairs continued in this ſtate at Powerſcourt till the following evening. Sir William grew perceptibly weaker, and Henry in vain endeavoured to inſpire Miſs Evans with the hopes which he had himſelf abandoned. Every ſound and every footſtep ſeemed to her charged with tidings from her friend. About nine in the evening a note arrived, which I ſhall tranſcribe.

To Miss Evans.

'Let not Miſs Evans ſtart at the writing of 'her once-beloved Geraldine. The loſt miſer-'able wretch preſumes not to claim the friend-'ſhip which was the delight of her happier days. 'I only aſk compaſſion. Tell me, is my father 'yet alive? If he is, exert that reſiſtleſs elo-'quence which convinces every heart, and move 'him to beſtow his parental bleſſing on his un-'done child. And for this act of mercy, the laſt 'I will ever ſolicit, my dying lips——but I dare 'not pray——I did not aſk the protecting care 'of Heaven.—I did not liſten to your counſels. '—I was ſelf-willed, boaſtful.—Ah! what am I 'now?

'now?—I have no home, no name, no one to 'recogniſe or to protect me. Lord Monteith '—but I deſerve his accuſations. Yet if I am 'the ſhameleſs being he calls me—I know not 'what I ſay.—O that eternal mercy would ſave 'me from the pangs of murdering my father!"

I ſpare all comment upon the feelings of Miſs Evans at receiving this incoherent epiſtle. Indeed it would be impoſſible to ſay, whether grief or joy, rage or pity predominated. The meſſenger ſtated, that the lady who ſent him was at an inn a few miles diſtant. The landlady told him it was a great pity that none of her friends came to her, for that ſhe was quite alone, very ill, and ſcarcely in her right mind.

Not an inſtant was loſt in expediting the deſired conſolation. The carriage was prepared, and the ſervants mounted, each contending, with all their national impetuoſity and humanity, who ſhould be the firſt to fetch back the reſpected fugitive. Lucy had determined to go, but Henry perſuaded her to change that reſolution. 'Spend 'the time of my abſence,' ſaid he, 'with your 'your father, and conſult his diſpaſſionate judg-'ment, whether it will be prudent to apprize ſir 'William that we have heard of her. Try too, 'my love, to prepare your fortitude for the moſt 'excruciating trial it ever ſuſtained. The dear 'unfortunate requires more than the tear of ſym-'pathizing ſorrow.'

'Reſtore her quickly to me,' cried Miſs Evans. 'I will watch her night and day. She ſhall 'be all my employment, all my care.'

'The ſpeed of my return will entirely depend 'upon her ability to bear the journey,' replied Henry.

Let

Let the ſuſceptible reader, who has attended to the delineation of lady Monteith's character through the preceding pages, conceive the ſituation of her mind at the time that her couſin joined her at the obſcure inn which afforded her a temporary aſylum. Let them recollect her keen abhorrence of diſgrace, her eager purſuit of fame, her acute ſenſibility as a daughter, a wife, and a mother. Let them contraſt the exquiſite refinement of her ideas with her preſent calamities, and releaſe me from the vain attempt of deſcribing her mental ſufferings.

She lay upon a couch; her eyes fixed and rayleſs; her liſtleſs arms hanging motionleſs; her face deadly pale, and half concealed by her redundant neglected hair. The attendant, who was ſitting by her, announced a gentleman who wiſhed to ſpeak with her. Inſtantly the ſtupefaction in her countenance changed to extreme terror. She graſped the girl's hand, and entreated her to ſave her, while her eyes rolled with frightful wildneſs. The terrified maid added, that his name was Powerſcourt; but that he ſhould not come in unleſs ſhe pleaſed. The counteſs relaxed her convulſive graſp, and ſunk fainting upon the couch.

Henry, who at that moment entered, contemplated, in mournful anguiſh, the change ſo ſuddenly wrought in the loveliеſt of female forms. While the remembrance of his youthful attachment gave a livelier impulſe to his ſuſceptibility, he rejoiced in the firm integrity which had preſerved him from the inſinuating enticements of an illicit paſſion, and claſping his hands in an ecſtaſy of piety, gratitude, and regret, he exclaimed, 'Thank God! I have not this to anſwer.'

Geraldine

Geraldine misinterpreted his emotion. 'I 'am a murderer then?—A parricide? He is 'dead.'

'No! he is still alive,' said Henry, in a faultering tone.

'And has he,' exclaimed she with impassioned frenzy, 'sent me any token of forgiveness?'

'I am come,' continued Henry, wetting with his tears the feverish hand which she held towards him, 'to conduct you home.'

'Blessed, angelic, peaceful sound!—My home! '——I never thought to have a home again.—O 'raise me up, let us go this instant.'

'Are you equal to the journey?'

'Yes. I can go home. O Heavenly sound! '—My father's house! And have I indeed yet a 'father?'

Unable to judge of her real strength during this paroxysm of joy, Mr. Powerscourt proposed waiting till the horses were refreshed. The uniform humanity of Geraldine shone through her disorder. 'My heart is surely grown hard with 'my misfortunes. Are they my father's *old* 'horses that used to take me out when I was a 'girl? I talk foolishly, Henry. I did know it 'was you.—I thought you was lord Monteith 'come back again—or I thought you—I know 'not whom—I was so terrified."

'Have you seen lord Monteith?'

'Yes. Don't blame me:—I hope for the last 'time. He used such horrid expressions. He 'would not allow me to speak to him. He will 'never let me see my children more.—Not once 'more, Henry.—I only asked for once, before I 'die. Is not this too hard even to such a wicked 'wretch as I am?'

Henry

Henry continued to bathe her hand with tears. They afforded ſome relief to his full-fraught heart.

'Shall I ever,' reſumed the plaintive mourner, 'ſee your Lucy?—You don't anſwer. Will 'ſhe ſpeak to me? Don't let her ſee me if ſhe 'will not ſpeak to me. Yet how ſhould I re-'joice to hear her voice once more!'

'She waits your arrival at Powerſcourt, there 'to join with all your friends in the pious taſk of 'ſoothing your afflictions.'

I paſs over the remainder of this diſtreſſing converſation. No perſuaſions could prevent lady Monteith from ſetting off that night for what ſhe termed her haven of reſt. She bore her journey better than Mr. Powerſcourt expected; and he perceived with pleaſure that the wanderings of her converſation were more the effect of wearineſs, ſorrow, and indiſpoſition, than of deranged intellects. She ſeemed to ſtruggle for fortitude, but her efforts failed her, when the carriage ſtopped. 'The prodigal returns,' ſaid ſhe, 'but 'where is the welcoming father?"

Henry now inquired after ſir William, and heard that he continued in the ſame ſtate. Mr. Powerſcourt ſupported, or rather carried, Geraldine into the breakfaſt parlour; but no previous reſolution could reſtrain Miſs Evans's tranſport on ſeeing her. 'My more than ſiſter!—dearer 'than friend! my love!—My Geraldine! Open 'thoſe ſweet eyes—ſpeak to thy faithful Lucy. '—Come, broken lily, reſt upon my boſom.—'Ever dear! ever lovely!—Dearer than in thy 'hours of happineſs!—Give me but ſign that 'thou doſt hear me. Only preſs my hand if thou 'can'ſt not ſpeak.' The languid counteſs feebly returned her friend's ardent preſſure, and dropped her

her liſtleſs head on Lucy's throbbing boſom; while Henry, gazing on his deſtined partner with looks of affectionate admiration, gently blamed the overflowing tenderneſs which charmed him to the ſoul.

Geraldine gradually revived. 'And this,' ſaid ſhe, 'is my father's houſe? And thou art 'Lucy?—And I hear no reproaches—no bit-'terly-remembered warnings.——O kind friends! '—O ſtill kinder Providence, thus to follow 'guilt with bleſſings!—But when ſhall I ſee my 'father?'

It had been previouſly determined that this awful interview ſhould be delayed till the next morning; and Geraldine at laſt reluctantly conſented to try to obtain ſome repoſe. 'It has been,' ſaid ſhe, 'a ſtranger to me——I know not how 'long.'

Her delirium ſeemed to return upon going into her apartment. 'Be ſure,' ſaid ſhe, 'you 'bar the doors and windows, and let ſomebody 'ſit up to guard me.'

Early the next morning, ſir William altered ſo conſiderably as to indicate immediate diſſolution. His daughter had juſt dropped into a broken ſlumber. Mr. Evans lamented the neceſſity of awakening her, but obſerved, that as her father was ſtill ſenſible, his forgiveneſs would be a laſting conſolation. Prepared by the counſels of this truly Chriſtian paſtor, Geraldine ſupported herſelf through the trying ſcene with meekneſs, piety and fortitude. Kneeling by his bed-ſide, ſhe felt the preſſure of his convulſed hand upon her head, received from his quivering lips the kiſs of reconciliation and peace, and watched the laſt ſtruggle of his parting ſoul, as it winged its flight to join in Heaven thoſe benevolent ſpirits

whom it had imitated on earth. Univerſal dejection accompanied the news of his death, and the tears of a grateful neighbourhood ſpoke his unequivocal eulogium.

CHAP. XV.

——One falſe ſtep for ever damns her fame;
In vain with tears ſhe may her loſs deplore;
In vain look back to what ſhe was before;
She ſets, like ſtars that fall, to riſe again no more.

ROWE.

THE obſervation of Solon, repeated by the celebrated Crœſus at the moſt intereſting period of his life, 'that we never ſhould pronounce a 'man happy until we have ſeen his end,' was ſtrikingly verified in my heroine's hiſtory. Her morn of exiſtence roſe with peculiar ſplendour; and even the contemplative philoſopher, who is accuſtomed to look beyond the ſurface, and to balance hope with experience, when he conſidered the rare advantages of judicious education, amiable temper, diſcreet habits, ample wealth, and exemplary connections, united in the perſon of the lovely Geraldine, muſt have concluded that no common viciſſitude of fortune could demoliſh this goodly fabric.

The commencement of her married life was, in the opinion of the generality of obſervers, equally

equally auſpicious. United to the man of her heart, her ſuperior in rank, and correſponding to herſelf in fortune, perſonal grace, and natural advantages, what 'a pity if aught" had intervened to prevent the Hymeneal bond from inſuring the happineſs of 'this matchleſs pair.' The latent ſpark of vanity, lurking in her boſom, was undeſcried; and no one could calculate how long it would be before the careleſs Monteith would drop the character of a lover. No one aſked, where is the firm judgment, the manly tenderneſs, which ſhould guide and direct this attracting woman through the thorny maze of public life? Every admirer of equipage, vivacity, ſplendour, and beauty, pronounced the perpetual happineſs of the earl and his bride.

Five years had elapſed ſince Powerſcourt-houſe exhibited the ſcene of feſtivity with which I uſhered in this narrative; and the ſun of Geraldine's peace is ſet for ever. The ſhadows lengthening, as the bright luminary deſcends, point at laſt to the tomb. The death of a revered father, full of age and honour, is not of itſelf an event to caſt a ſable hue over the ſcarcely mature life of a dutiful affectionate daughter; but the circumſtances attending ſir William Powerſcourt's demiſe were ſuch as lady Monteith could *never* overcome. She felt convinced that ſhe had ſhortened his exiſtence; and though his parting ſpirit, uniformly benignant, bleſſed and forgave his involuntary murderer, a thouſand fatal indiſcretions roſe to her remembrance, and, ſeen through the medium of their effects, they no longer appeared pardonable levities. She who had aſpired to give delight and comfort to all around her, had brought diſgrace on her huſband, infamy on her children and death to her father. The pious conſolation's

of Mr. Evans alleviated the horrors of her firſt deſpair; but mining grief confirmed the ravages which fatigue and terror had made in her delicate frame. Each riſing morning ſeemed to announce ſome faded charm. Uniform dejection uſurped the place of her faſcinating ſmile. Feebleneſs and melancholy alike reſtrained her ſportively graceful movements; and inſtead of the coruſcations of her ſprightly wit, 'ſorrow unfeigned and humiliation deep' ſpoke in all her accents.

Yet the heireſs of ſir William Powerſcourt's fortunes muſt ſtill poſſeſs ſufficient charms to allure a mercenary heart; and Fitzoſborne (whom cowardice and chicane had preſerved from the vengeance which lord Monteith's pardonable fury firſt prompted him to require for his injured honour) encouraged the audacious hope, that the legal proceſs which the frantic huſband immediately commenced to vindicate his wrongs would terminate in the accompliſhment of all his wiſhes, by putting him in poſſeſſion of a wealthy and admired wife. Miſled by his own falſe maxims, which had taught him to believe that 'a woman 'pardons every inſult when ſhe loves the inſult-'er,' he ventured on the atrocious crimes which made him maſter of lady Monteith's perſon, while he knew her uncontaminated ſoul revolted at the idea of conjugal infidelity. He was now perſuaded, that ſhe muſt feel anxious to repair her tarniſhed honour: and being convinced that grief and ſhame never proved fatal to youth and beauty, when its return to reputation and happineſs ſeemed not only poſſible, but certain, he determined to make my drooping Heroine, what he called, an *honourable* offer. In the letter which he addreſſed to her upon this occaſion, he explained his ſentiments with more explicit freedom than

than he had dared to do while Geraldine, proud in conſcious innocence, felt no neceſſity of applying for conſolation to the ſubterfuges of ſophiſm. But he now thought her predominant love of fame and horror of reproach would induce her to extricate herſelf from the diſgrace in which his infamous artifices and her own credulity had plunged her, by adopting thoſe excuſes which were invented to enfeeble virtue, and to ſanctify vice. He knew indeed, that ſhe had a tale to tell, which would harrow up the hearer's ſoul; but he well underſtood the laws by which public opinion is regulated, and the delicacy of her ſentiments. Theſe reaſons convinced him, that ſhe would never expoſe her defence to a doubtful belief. I ſhall now ſubjoin his letter written about two months after ſir William's death, with her reply.

'To the COUNTESS of MONTEITH.

'Madam,

'When I reflect upon the melancholy event 'which has recently happened at Powerſcourt, I 'feel that an additional odium devolves upon me, 'which reflection and candour muſt own I have 'not deſerved. Could I poſſibly have foreſeen, 'that when I felt the power of your irreſiſtible 'charms, I was preparing the grave of your 'worthy father! No, loveliеſt, and moſt-adored 'of women! whatever of imperfection and frailty 'may be attached to my character, it is pure from 'the reproach of deliberate cruelty.

'I hear, with inexpreſſible concern, that your 'too ſuſceptible mind ſinks under the inconve-'niences of your preſent ſituation. Suffer me,

'madam,

'madam, to remove the veil of ſorrow which now 'clouds your reaſon, and permit me to direct 'your view to future proſpects. Inconſideration 'like mine (for I, in juſtice, claim that the 'blame ſhould be ſolely confined to myſelf) is too 'frequent in this age to excite indignation; and 'the known unworthineſs of lord Monteith forms 'an excuſe which all ladies who have diſſolved 'their firſt marriage connection cannot plead. 'Some converſation will indeed be excited, while 'his lordſhip purſues the legal revenge which his 'vindictive temper will prompt him to adopt. 'But it will ceaſe with the adventures of the 'day. Your preſent exemplary behaviour will 'reſtore you to the eſteem of the world; and 'permit me, Madam, to indulge a hope, (it is 'the only one which, ſince I have heard of your 'extreme diſtreſs, makes my exiſtence ſupporta-'ble,) that you will deign to accept the repara-'tion which it is in my power to make you, by 'allowing me to lead you to the altar the moment 'you are free from your preſent diſaſtrous tie. 'There, I truſt with the moſt auſpicious omens, 'will I dedicate to you a heart penetrated with 'your merits, and a mind capable of revering all 'the dazzling ſuperiority of taſte, information, 'and diſcernment, which you poſſeſs.

'I muſt hope, that the happy moment will ar-'rive, when we ſhall look back upon our paſt ſor-'rows with complacency, and conſider them as 'the progenitors of preſent bliſs. But why 'ſhould exceſſive ſorrow *now* prey upon your 'heart? It is but to ſee you, adorned as you are 'with all that art and nature can beſtow of lovely 'and excellent; it is but to contraſt your cha-'racter with that of the imperious inſenſible be-'ing to whom a juvenile inclination unhappily

engaged

'engaged you; and he muſt be loſt to the moſt
'amiable feelings of humanity who does not ex-
'cuſe and pity me. The moſt enlightened lite-
'rati of the age have proved, that chaſtity con-
'ſiſts in the individuality of affection; and when
'lord Monteith's conduct has forfeited your af-
'fection, the transfer of your perſon to another
'is equally delicate and juſt. Marriage, being
'merely a civil engagement, cannot invalidate
'the great laws of Nature; and the man muſt be
'a prey to the moſt narrow prejudices, who would
'deny a woman the right of flying to the protec-
'tion of a kindred mind, when her revolting
'ſoul ſpurns the tyrannical power of a huſband
'whom ſhe can neither reſpect nor love.

'O my beloved Geraldine! ſuffer me to drop
'the hateful title of your former thraldom, and
'to call you mine. I have been contented to
'ſuppreſs the keen indignation of wounded ho-
'nour, and have forborne to interrupt your filial
'ſorrows by an explanation of what muſt appear
'to you a baſe deſertion when I left you at the
'inn at ———. Alas! I only propoſed an ab-
'ſence of a few hours to procure you an honour-
'able aſylum in my ſiſter's family; and during
'that interval Monteith, with the capricious cru-
'elty natural to his diſpoſition, bereft me of the
'treaſure I had riſked ſo much to obtain, and
'then abandoned it to an unfeeling world. What
'anguiſh have I not ſuffered ſince that moment!
'Yet, ſtill more to convince you of the reſpectful
'delicacy of my unaltered love, I will not aſk per-
'miſſion to throw myſelf at your feet till the
'joyful moment of your emancipation. Then
'will I lead you back to the world, nine-tenths
'of whom will not only juſtify but applaud your
'conduct. That ſyſtem of univerſal benevo-

lence,

'lence, which ſuperſedes all written precept, 'gains ground. To that do we appeal, and 'not to the inſane morality of ſpecific injunc-'tions, which fooliſhly and even wickedly at-'tempt to bring individual actions under the 'limitation of one general rule. Man in ſo-'ciety muſt retain all his natural rights; and 'the reſtraints that circumſcribe thoſe rights '(if founded upon falſe principles) muſt ſoon 'ſubmit to the reſiſtleſs voice of public opinion. 'Nor does this ſyſtem tend to encourage gene-'ral profligacy of manners. No! it can only 'apply to thoſe more intelligent characters, 'whoſe refinement is a ſecurity againſt licen-'tiouſneſs.

'So acute is my own conſciouſneſs of error, 'that my heart ſtarts from the remorſeful re-'collection of ſome indirect means, not wholly 'conſiſtent with the lovely ſincerity of truth, 'which my reſiſtleſs paſſion for you urged me 'to adopt. For the deceptions which only love 'can excuſe, I humbly entreat your pardon, and 'I faithfully promiſe you, that as they were the 'firſt, ſo they ſhall be the laſt inſtances of mo-'ral turpitude which you ſhall ever diſcover in 'the conduct of,

'Madam,

'Your entirely devoted

'EDWARD FITZOSBORNE.

'TO THE HONOURABLE EDWARD FITZOSBORNE.

'DOES Mr. Fitzoſborne ſuppoſe the unhap-'py victim of his treachery as meanly baſe as 'he has proved her to be weakly credulous,

'that

'that he affronts her with a a propoſal, which
'atrocious guilt alone empowers him to make;
'and from the indignity of which ſhe was *once*
'happily ſecured by inſurmountable barriers,
'till he reduced her to the dire neceſſity of ſur-
'rendering the ſacred name of wife, and ming-
'ling her bluſhes with her tears, when ſhe hears
'the once-joyful honourable appellation of
'mother?

'You ſeem, ſir, to diſown the charge of deli-
'berate cruelty. Account, if you can, for your
'conduct by any other motive. You know
'what I was when I had firſt the misfortune of
'ſeeing you. You know how ſoon you formed
'a plan for my deſtruction, and by what arts
'you have made me what I am. You know
'too, how your inſidious friendſhip ſeduced
'lord Monteith, and made him unconſciouſly
'acceſſary to my undoing. To you he owes
'the contamination of his once unſullied ho-
'nour. From you, my innocent, diſgraced,
'deſerted children, require their mother,
'their inſtructor, the guardian of their in-
'fant years. From you I demand my ruined
'peace, my unſullied fame, my loſt health, and
'ever blaſted proſpect, which, while they ren-
'dered life valuable, taught me to look on death
'with ſerenity. I not only require of you the
'life of my dear venerable father, but I alſo
'charge you with having given inconceivable
'anguiſh to the laſt hours of one who lived but
'to make others happy; whoſe benevolence
'would not have hurt a worm!—He is at reſt.—
'Would I were ſo too!—O that I were now
'joined to his pure beatified ſpirit!—But I muſt
'firſt paſs through many a purifying ſea of ſor-
'row. How excruciatingly refined has your

'cruelty been! Life is insupportable, but I dare 'not ask to die.

'I scorn to reply to the *arguments* urged in 'your infamous letter. Address them, sir, to 'those who, while they lead a life of guilt, wish '*cheaply* to purchase the reputation of virtue. 'Yet beware how you confide in them, when 'the awful summons of death calls you to an 'invisible world. For me, all my temporal 'views have terminated. I seek no subterfuges. 'I will endure the censures of the world; they 'are my just portion. Its vindications I would 'reject with disdain. I submit to whatever 'punishment lord Monteith's lawful resentment 'inflicts. It does not belong to imprudence 'like mine either to justify its actions, or to 'complain of suffering. In repentance is all 'my hope.

'I will enumerate the offences which claim 'my constant tears. You will then see what 'portion of guilt falls to your share—Your 'artful adulation pleased my vanity, and while 'I supposed myself merely amused by your con-'versation, you excited a growing interest in 'my regard. To you, by imperceptible degrees, 'I transferred the esteem of which I thought 'my lord undeserving; and I soothed my re-'proving conscience by supposing, that in ad-'miring you, I honoured virtue. Blindly per-'tinacious, I persisted in rejecting the councils 'of my more discerning friends, and pursued 'my own fallacious judgment, which taught 'me, that immoral actions were not the natu-'ral consequence of relaxed principle. You 'know that you concealed the full tendency of 'those principles from me. You know that I 'always started at what I thought seemed to

'militate

'militate againſt religion and virtue. You 'often aſſailed me, but I was your admirer and 'apologiſt, not your convert.

'Thus far have I contributed to my undoing; 'and may my ſtory be an awful momento to all 'who, truſting in the ſuppoſed ſecurity of their 'own virtue, neglect the ſuggeſtions of pru- 'dence; and, under the perverted name of 'friendſhip, admit a ſiniſter gueſt to diſpute the 'poſſeſſion of their affections with the lawful 'claims of connubial duty! May it alſo warn 'thoſe wives, who, availing themſelves of the 'indulgence of faſhion, permit the marked at- 'tentions of an agreeable man of unknown or 'ſuſpicious character, however they may think 'themſelves ſanctioned by cuſtom, protected by 'the rules of decorum, or ſecured, as you taught 'me to think, by the bond of pre-attachment, 'I ſhall not then die in vain.

'Let me, though ſhame and horror alike 'agitate my trembling frame, this once allude 'to thoſe particulars of my misfortunes, which 'you alone can illuſtrate. You ſeem to allow, 'that it was to your artifices that I owed the 'fatal abſence of my friend and my huſband on 'the day I left Monteith. You know the ar- 'guments by which you influenced my elope- 'ment; may your repentance enable you to 'eſcape the terrible malediction with which you 'cloſed them. You know how I hoped to over- 'take my lord at every ſtage; but your heart, 'rendered callous by guilt, cannot conceive the 'agonies of mine when I firſt ſuſpected your 'nefarious purpoſe. My confuſed recollection 'can trace no more. I only know, that re- 'turning reaſon taught me, that I was a wretch 'for ever.

'And

'And can you—who know that your life is 'in my hands, who are conſcious that, by tell- 'ing my ſad tale in a court of juſtice, I could 'convict you of a crime more foul than mur- 'der—ſuppoſe me capable of plighting my faith 'to a monſter? No! Fitzoſborne; enjoy the 'ſecurity which my own feelings, and not 'compaſſion for you, allows you to poſſeſs; but 'inſult me no more. Know, that the moment 'which revealed your baſeneſs tore from my 'heart every veſtige of eſteem, and taught me, 'by my deteſtation of the offence, to hate and 'to deſpiſe the offender.

'From a wiſh of rouſing in your breaſt the 'torpid feelings of compunction, I honour your 'letter with a copious reply. The compliments 'you pay to beauty are ill addreſſed to the fad- 'ed form which pens this epiſtle; and the 'praiſe of ſuperior talents are equally inappli- 'cable to her whom you have proved guilty of 'the weakeſt vanity, and the blindeſt credu- 'lity.

'I have forfeited the name with which lord 'Monteith once honoured me, and I will not 'diſgrace the unſullied purity of my father's.

'GERALDINE.'

An intereſting converſation took place be- tween my heroine and her friend upon the ſub- ject of theſe letters. The counteſs had ſhewn them to Miſs Evans, and requeſted her opinion of the tendency of her reply. 'Worthy of 'yourſelf,' was the anſwer. 'But there is one 'part,' continued Lucy, 'which ſeems to aſk 'for explanation: Some particulars of your 'ſtory are unknown to me, nor do I wiſh to

'hear

'hear what it will be agony for you to repeat.
'But why, my deareſt! do you heſitate to do
'juſtice to your wounded fame, perhaps too to
'preſerve ſome other victim from meditated
'ruin, by giving up a villain to that puniſhment
'which the offended laws of his country would
'inflict upon his atrocious crimes?'

'My reſolution,' ſaid the counteſs, is fixed;
'but you ſhall hear the reaſons on which it is
'founded. You know the fabricated tale
'which drew me from Monteith. My recol-
'lection, then not clear, ſoon grew more con-
'fuſed; and it is only by comparing circum-
'ſtances that I can connect my narrative. I
'think I muſt have been firſt taken to an obſcure
'houſe in a lonely ſituation; for I recollect on
'the horſes ſtopping I ſaw only trees and a
'mean building, and I thought how fooliſh it
'was to ſtop there, as my lord would never put
'up at ſuch a place as that.—I ſuppoſe that I
'was detained there till my purſuers had paſſed
'upon the road. I remember travelling very
'faſt; but my head was too bad for me to gueſs
'where. It was on a Thurſday that I left the
'caſtle. My lord found me in a ſmall inn in
'Lancaſhire on Tueſday. I was ſitting in a
'room by myſelf, and weeping bitterly, when
'he burſt in. He reviled me in the ſevereſt
'terms, and aſked me for Fitzoſborne. I told
'him that I did not know where he was, and
'wiſhed I never might ſee him more.—Indeed,
'Lucy, I ſpoke the truth; but my lord redou-
'bled his ravings.—I know that I ſaid I was
'not ſo wicked as he ſuppoſed; and I made an
'effort to kneel; but whether he ſpurned me
'from him, or I fell through giddineſs, I can-
'not tell.—I hurt myſelf in my fall; and, re-

'covering,

'covering, found myſelf covered with blood. 'But my head was relieved, and I was treated 'with compaſſion. I kept aſking for my lord. 'They told me, that he was gone after the 'gentleman who came with me. O what a 'ſound was that for me! The people at the inn 'were worthy characters. They believed me 'to be penitent, and aſſiſted me to eſcape from 'my ſeducer. I knew not where to go; but I 'thought you would adviſe me. I travelled 'rapidly towards Powerſcourt, till I heard of my 'father's illneſs. You know the reſt.'

The trembling Geraldine faltered as ſhe repeated this melancholy tale, and then ſunk weeping on the boſom of her friend.

'Suppoſe me now,' continued ſhe, as ſoon as ſhe could recover compoſure enough to proceed, 'repeating this narrative in a court of juſtice; 'every eye fixed upon me with offenſive curi- 'oſity; inſulted (at leaſt in my own opinion) 'by that croſs-examination, which impartial 'juſtice will require to diſcover whether I was 'not the willing partner of the crime. The 'powers of eloquence will be exerted againſt me. 'Confuſion may make me prevaricate; and 'when life is at ſtake, mercy pleads for the cri- 'minal whoſe guilt appears doubtful. None 'of my own ſervants were with me. I can 'bring no corroborating evidence. It will be 'proved, that I was ſeen with him on the road, 'and at ſeveral inns, and made no effort to eſ- 'cape. My appearance may have cauſed con- 'tradictory opinions; and art like his would 'certainly take care that the general impreſſion 'ſhould be unfavourable. To thoſe who know 'not my uſual manner, I might ſeem paſſive, 'or acquieſcent, as well as inſenſible.

'But

'But ſuppoſe my character receives all the 'juſtification it can by his condemnation, of 'what advantage will his death be to me, or to 'the world? The vain beauty, who is not de-'terred by my misfortunes from liſtening to the 'adulations of a Fitzoſborne, will not be diſ-'ſuaded from encouraging the ſiren ſong of 'flattery by hearing that a determined ſeducer 'can call in arts more unwarranted than illicit 'perſuaſion. Lord Monteith can never be re-'united to me. His honour and my delicacy 'demonſtrate the impoſſibility of oblivious for-'giveneſs. Wherever my children appeared, 'the ſad tale of their mother would ſtill be 'whiſpered, and the bluſh of ſhame muſt dye 'their cheeks.

'Nor,' continued ſhe, wiping the tear which maternal feelings called forth, 'can the mortal 'wound in my reputation ever be healed. I 'am conſcious of a thouſand indiſcretions, pro-'ceeding indeed from the erroneous idea, that 'every virtue, as well as every accompliſhment, 'united in Fitzoſborne's mind. Not an ac-'quaintance have I in Scotland, or in London, 'who cannot relate thoſe indiſcretions, and tell 'with what marked preference I received his 'attentions; and when theſe corroborating tales 'are conſidered, will candour ſay, 'Perhaps 'the vain trifler ſtopped at actual guilt?' A 'thouſand incidental circumſtances concur to 'overwhelm me. My mother's jewels are now 'in his poſſeſſion. They were not given with 'a culpable deſign; but who will acquit me? 'who knows that lord Monteith's affairs were 'embarraſſed? Or ſuppoſe I ſtate my motives: 'there again I am ſole witneſs in my own 'cauſe; and ſhe who beſtowed on a ſtranger the

'confidence

'confidence which she withheld from her husband, can scarcely expect belief. I gave him my picture too.—Good heaven, what blind delusion! No! Lucy; I must be silent. I have been too culpable to talk of innocence. 'The licentious would say, poor Fitzosborne was very hardly used at last by the woman who invited his attack; and the censorious would accuse me of taking a cruel method to redeem an irretrievable reputation.'

'Still,' said Miss Evans, 'there are advantages which you have not considered. Your daughters would certainly be restored to your care.' A flood of tears burst from the eyes of Geraldine, and she faintly uttered: 'Sweet, lovely, helpless girls!' Then, after a pause, she added, 'Could I flatter myself with the expectation that my protracted life would be advantageous to them, this suggestion would have weight; but a *transient* self-indulgence may be bought too dear.'

'At least,' urged Lucy, 'let Monteith know your story. Convinced of your comparative innocence, (you will not, I know, allow me to use a more favourable word,) Henry has been for some time employed in collecting the circumstances in your favour. The chief are the testimony and the confession of your servants at Monteith. Suffer him to add to it your narrative, before he transmits it to your lord.'

'By no means: use your influence with your generous Henry to abandon his proposed justification. I know the disposition of him who *was* my husband. While he considers me as an adulteress, contempt preserves my gallant

'from

'from his vengeance; and he can wait the ſlow 'proceedings of the law now his firſt fury has 'ſubſided. But if he knows the wrongs his 'once-beloved Geraldine has endured, not the 'united world could diſſuade from taking a 'more ſummary vengeance. He would pur-'ſue the raviſher of his wife to the remoteſt 'corner of the globe, and only value his own 'life as it was the means of aſſailing his adver-'ſary. Chance, or ſkill, my Lucy, and not juſ-'tice, determines theſe blind and audacious ap-'peals to preſumptuous vengeance. And ſhall 'my helpleſs babes loſe their only parent? No! 'let every document in my favour be ſuppreſſ-'ed, at leaſt till lord Monteith is ſecure from 'the ſword of my ſeducer.'

'Conſider yet once more. Your lord has 'commenced proceedings in a court of juſtice.' —'I have deſerved diſgrace, and muſt endure 'it.'

'The legitimacy of your little ſon, I fear, is 'queſtioned.'

Geraldine ſhrank with horror. 'O wide ex-'tended evil! ſaid ſhe. Three generations, 'blaſted by me, may curſe the hour when I was 'born. Yet, my murdered father! thy benig-'nant ſpirit, even in the pangs of death, for-'gave me. Will my ſlandered babes be inexo-'rable? But I ſhall not hear their reproaches. 'The time is not far diſtant when I may ſpeak 'with an expectation of being believed. I will 'juſtify to lord Monteith the ſuſpected, becauſe 'premature, birth of his ſon. O inſupportable 'anguiſh? that ſuch juſtification ſhould be re-'quired of me.'

Miſs

Miſs Evans repeated this converſation to her father and Henry. The latter praiſed the greatneſs of ſoul which dictated theſe ſentiments.

'Your intereſting friend, my dear child, does 'indeed repent,' ſaid Mr. Evans. 'No vindic-'tive rage, no ſelf-acquitting accuſations of 'others, mingles with her true remorſe. She 'properly appreciates the degree of her own 'culpability; nor does any remaining affection 'for her ſeducer lurk in her paſſionate reproach-'es. She ſeems, like the penitent deſcribed by 'our immortal bard,

——'To repent her, as it is an evil,
'And takes the ſhame with joy!'

'To ſuch contrition we are warranted to hope 'that the golden gates of mercy will be un-'cloſed.'

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

Hail wedded love!——by thee,
Founded in reaſon, loyal, juſt, and pure,
Relations dear, and all the charities
Of father, ſon, and brother, firſt were known.
MILTON.

GRIEF, the ſwift anticipator of time, continued to prey on Geraldine's youthful cheek. Her decay was viſible to every beholder. But Lucy Evans, ſtill liſtening to the flattery of hope, believed that another and another day would bring the deſired amendment. Paſſionately admiring the beauties of nature, ſhe wooed the tardy ſpring to approach, and continued to repeat the well-known deſcription;

——Airs, vernal airs,
Able to cure all ſadneſs but deſpair.

Deſpair was, however, the mortal diſeaſe, under which her friend laboured. Like Shenſtone's intereſting Jeſſy, ſhe ſaw in every object ſome reproach of her folly, or ſome memento of her former happineſs. 'What have I,' ſhe would ſay to herſelf, 'to do with hope; and what 'without hope is life?'

Engroſſed wholly by her friend's diſtreſs, Lucy dedicated all her time and thoughts to her ſervice and amuſement. 'If I could ſee that 'faded cheek bluſh again!' ſhe would ſay. 'Surely

'Surely her appetite leaves her. I watch her 'sleepleſs couch till I ſink with wearineſs. I 'wake, and the firſt object which the lamp 'ſhews me is her uncloſed eyes. I offend my 'own feelings to aſſume cheerfulneſs. She 'ſometimes ſmiles, but it is ſuch a ſickly ſmile, 'ſo unlike its former exhilarating brilliancy, 'it ſpeaks ſo plainly, I will even ſeem diverted 'to ſooth my apprehenſive Lucy.'

Henry Powerſcourt often reproved this extreme ſolicitude; blamed her for being engroſſed by one object; and pleaded his prior right to her attention, and her promiſe of making him happy. 'O, talk not to me of feſtal 'days and happy vows,' ſhe would reply, 'when every hour preſents to me the affecting 'ſpectacle of declining lovelineſs! Surely, 'Henry, you never loved our Geraldine, if you 'can now think of any one but her.'

It was one lovely ſpring-day, that Lucy prevailed upon her friend to accompany her into the parſonage-garden, to look at the burſting germs of the lilac, and the honey-ſuckle's tender green. They had proceeded to Nerina's bower before the trembling knees of Geraldine required reſt. When a little recovered, ſhe read with pleaſure the inſcription which Henry had placed there, while Lucy energetically repeated the laſt lines; and not inſenſible to the charm of praiſe, when offered by one ſhe loved, ſhe exclaimed, 'There's a happy compliment for 'you. You uſed to ſay, couſin Hal would 'never learn to make fine ſpeeches.'

The ſmile which Lucy's ſprightly ſally invited ſoon yielded to the bitter recollection of former days. 'Happy blameleſs delight!' ſaid the counteſs gazing on her friend: 'long may

'it

'it be yours! May my ſweet Lucy continue to
'receive the incenſe due to her worth, nor fear
'that a latent poiſon lurks in the grateful fra-
'grance! Ah, that I had never welcomed
'praiſe but from a huſband's tongue!

'Let me,' continued ſhe, 'here, in this
'your favoured retreat, diſcloſe to you the hiſ-
'tory of my errors. You need no warning;
'but the time will probably *ſoon* arrive, when
'the remembered confidence will ſtill more
'endear this ſpot.

'I had not been long a wife before I diſco-
'vered that my eye had betrayed my judgment
'ſo far as to fruſtrate my expectation of ever
'finding in marriage that communion of well-
'paired minds, that feaſt of reaſon and that
'flow of ſoul which I had looked up to as the
'perfection of felicity. Every attempt to give
'lord Monteith a taſte for intellectual pleaſures
'was unſucceſsful. But I was not unhappy.
'I remember your excellent mother's precepts,
'and reconciled myſelf to the limited enjoy-
'ments which this world affords. In every
'eccentricity I beheld myſelf the undiſputed
'miſtreſs of my huſband's heart. In many
'inſtances I ſaw my power over his determina-
'tions; and often a genuine trait of native
'goodneſs appeared in ſomething apparently
'inconſiſtent and irregular. I compared my
'ſituation with that of many married ladies
'whom I knew, and I found abundant reaſon
'to be contented with my lot.

'I then firſt ſaw Fitzoſborne, and unhappily
'poſſeſſed ſufficient conſequence to attract his
'notice. He ſtrove to pleaſe, and ſoon grew
'intereſting. Yet, weak as I have proved
'myſelf to be, I think I ſhould not have been

'the

'the victim of his arts, had not my lord's be-
'haviour to me been perceptibly changed. He
'was no longer the man who engaged my
'youthful love, or the husband who claimed
'my respect and gratitude. Then, and not
'till then, did I feel the power of contrast
'which I had hitherto indignantly avoided.
'The elegant commendations of Fitzosborne
'taught me, that I was not a being of a vulgar
'mould. His graceful attentions indicated the
'homage which merit like mine ought to re-
'ceive. His glowing descriptions, though de-
'licate as the ear of purity itself could desire,
'pointed out a fairy region of felicity, the abode
'of congenial minds, where human foibles and
'human sorrows never intrude. Infatuated by
'this unreal vision, the blameless occupations
'by which I had previously diverted painful
'reflections became insipid. Wrongs were
'converted into unpardonable injuries, and in-
'attentions grew into wrongs. I no longer re-
'collected those who were less happy than
'myself. The pang of wounded love lost its
'tenderness, while it assumed the indignant
'spirit of offended pride; and my rebel heart,
'imperceptibly alienated from its lawful pos-
'sessor, admitted an usurped claim.

'O, Lucy! if my tale were told, it would
'not only serve as a warning to our weak sex,
'whom vanity or susceptibility generally betrays,
'but also to those husbands who are anxious
'to guard their honour from reproach. I
'would bid them not entirely depend upon the
'stability of our principles or the constancy of
'our attachments, but to assist our virtue by
'that almost invincible defence which their be-
'haviour to us would supply. Might they not,

'without

'without derogating from their own ſuperi-
'ority, treat our foibles with generous lenity,
'and make even our faults conducive to our
'ſecurity? Praiſe is never ſo grateful as from
'thoſe we love. Attentions are never ſo pleaſ-
'ing as from our deareſt friends. Let them
'not, when they neglect us, ſuppoſe, that the
'aſſiduity of an agreeable follower is only
'welcome to the *determined* wanton. The de-
'licate mind, that ſhrinks abhorrent from the
'thought of guilt, may divert the pangs of
'unrequited affection by indulging the unſuſ-
'pected feelings of eſteem and gratitude for
'an amiable obſervant friend. Modern man-
'ners juſtify theſe connections, and modern
'hiſtory deſcribes their reſult. But let me not
'recriminate. My hopes of pardon are founded
'on my own penitence, not on the aggravation
'of my huſband's errors. The ſuperior ad-
'vantages of my education, my habits of re-
'flection, my ſenſe of ſhame, the acuteneſs of
'my ſenſibility, were all entruſted talents;
'and I recollect with terror the awful aſſur-
'ance, that where much is given much will be
'required.'

'Still, my Geraldine!' cried Lucy, 'ſtill art
'thou the aſſociate of the pure in heart.'

'I might have been, had I liſtened to your
'counſels. Have you forgiven me, Lucy? I
'fear you have not.'

'Forgiven you? O! when did you offend?'

'Then will you undertake to pay a debt
'which has long burdened my conſcience? I
'muſt hope to live to ſee it diſcharged.'

Lucy's finances were not very abundant. She could ſcarcely underſtand her friend's intention.

'Reward

'Reward Henry Powerſcourt,' continued the counteſs; 'for you alone can. And let 'my ſetting ſun contemplate the only object 'on which it can now look with pleaſure. My 'contagious miſery has extended to all I love. 'Be you and your generous noble Henry ex-'ceptions.'

Lucy could not reſiſt this affectionate appeal. She only pleaded, that the death of their revered benefactor was too recent.

'His daughter,' reſumed the mourner, 'wiſhes to perform the office which he would 'gladly have executed: I mean, beſtowing 'you on a deſerving partner. Look, Lucy, is 'there much time to loſe? Will this hand be 'long equal to the pleaſing taſk?'

Geraldine, as ſhe ſpoke, held up her hand againſt the ſun. Its ſymmetry was formerly one of her diſtinguiſhed charaćts. It now exhibited a bare anatomy, looſely covered by a ſhrivelled ſkin. Each meandering vein and ligature was viſible. It ſcarcely obſtrućted the penetrating beam. Lucy flung herſelf into her friend's arms, and mingled compliance with her tears.

On the day of celebration, lady Monteith, in compliment to the bride, changed her ſable dreſs for the taſteful elegance of her former habit. She never looked more lovely. A hectic bloom was ſpread over her cheek, and the accompliſhment of a favourite wiſh gave to her eyes the radiant emanation which they uſed to poſſeſs. She was compoſed, and almoſt cheerful. She ſeemed to forbid the intruſive ſorrow which preyed upon her own heart, and to drive the remembrance of her woes from others. A plain reſpectable neighbour of the Evans's, and

his

his wife, were the only company. They were ſtruck with her appearance, and almoſt ſeemed to inquire, 'Was that Miſs Powerſcourt that 'was, or was it ſome angel in her form?' In the overflowing of their hearts they talked of the manor-houſe, the happy ſcenes of feſtivity it exhibited when ſhe lived there; and then repeated their blunt wiſhes, that it might *ſoon* be as gay again. The counteſs accepted the well-intentioned compliment, and added, that ſhe hoped it would. Her eyes glanced upon the bride's, who met them with an expreſſion of pleaſure. 'She hopes to live,' whiſpered ſhe to Henry. 'O ſurely that hope will be grati-'fied!'

The morning after theſe auſpicious nuptials was marked by a converſation peculiarly intereſting. Lady Monteith had prepared the neceſſary forms, and ſhe took this opportunity of delivering to Mr. Powerſcourt what ſhe called a pledge of her eſteem. He ſaw with ſurpriſe and regret, that it was a gift of that part of the Powerſcourt eſtate which was by her marriage ſettlement reſerved for her unlimited diſpoſal. Henry exclaimed againſt the profuſe generoſity of her intentions; affirmed, that her father's bounty had gratified all his wiſhes; and pointed out the propriety of preſenting it to lord Monteith.

'What,' ſaid the counteſs, 'to purchaſe 'forgiveneſs for me? My lord would diſdain 'to receive what I ſhould bluſh to offer."

'For your children then,' ſaid Powerſcourt. 'My daughter's fortunes are ſufficiently am-'ple, and lord Monteith's muſt revert to his 'ſon. Do not, Henry, reject this gift, if you 'would not add to my preſent ſorrows. I

'have been unjuſt to your merits, even from 'my girliſh days. But though I may confeſs 'my undiſcerning caprice, I do not lament 'what has ſecured your happineſs by uniting 'you to a mind ſo much better adapted to the 'firm integrity of your own. Mine is not a 'diſintereſted bequeſt. How richly may you 'repay this ſordid boon by the communication 'of unperiſhing advantages! I have no right 'to the diſpoſal of my children. I gave them 'being, but I have forfeited all pretenſions to 'direct their education, or to diſpoſe of their 'perſons. Every requeſt which I could make 'would but inflame lord Monteith's juſt reſent-'ment. You have never wronged him: on 'the contrary, your diſcrimination and inte-'grity would have preſerved me from the abyſs 'into which I have plunged. Perhaps a proper 'repreſentation might induce him to commit to 'your care thoſe unhappy objects, whom 'wounded honour muſt refuſe to their wretched 'mother. They no longer can give him plea-'ſure, and he muſt wiſh to remove from him 'ſuch lively mementos of former happineſs.'

Mr. Powerſcourt and his Lucy both promiſed to ſolicit the ſacred truſt, and to diſcharge it with punctual fidelity.

'And you too will continue to reſide with us?' inquired the bride.

The counteſs ſhook her head.

'Where do you mean to go?' repeated Mrs. Powerſcourt.

'There is but one aſylum,' anſwered Geraldine. 'If I could but be received there."— 'Can we aſſiſt you in procuring it?' reſumed her affectionate friend.

'I firmly

'I firmly believe, that you all have an in-
'tereſt there,' continued the counteſs, looking round her. 'Remember me in your prayers.' Lucy, no longer able to miſtake her meaning, burſt into tears; while Powerſcourt, too much agitated even to notice the diſtreſs of his beloved wife, attempted to relieve the gloom which depreſſed lady Monteith's proſpects. He talked of the claims which ſociety had upon her, and of the power of time in ſoftening grief.

'What claims has ſociety,' returned ſhe,
'upon a wretch whom every one that is tena-
'cious of reputation muſt abjure? My huſ-
'band muſt caſt me off, or be degraded by the
'reproach of ſubmitting to wilful infamy. My
'children muſt be eſtranged from my ſight, or
'be ſuſpected of being infected by my conta-
'minating criminality. Time, Mr. Powerſ-
'court, will heal the wounds of common ſor-
'rows: it may redreſs the wrongs of inno-
'cence, or recruit the ſhattered fortunes of
'poverty. But what can time do for me? Can
'it obviate the fatal effects of my errors; recall
'my father from his grave; give to my chil-
'dren that unſullied honour which my conduct
'has tarniſhed; or reſtore to myſelf that peace
'of mind which I feel to be for ever forfeited?
'If time can accompliſh theſe wonders, wel-
'come years of ſuffering; welcome the ago-
'nies which lead to hopes ſo dear; welcome
'the poignant regret which teaches the value
'of bleſſings that may be again enjoyed. But
'neither time nor ſorrow can reinſtate me in
'theſe loſt bleſſings, or reſtore to me the good
'opinion of the world. My ſecluded remorſe
'has no witneſſes; and if it were oſtentatious,

'it would be ſuſpicious. Part of my ſtory re-
'mains untold; but, judging of what is known,
'the world is right in its renunciation of me.
'No rules are preſcribed for my future con-
'duct, except ſecluſion, repentance, and
'death.'

Mr. Evans interrupted the pathetic pauſe which ſucceeded the counteſs's affecting concluſion with all the ſolemn earneſtneſs which ſhould ever characterize the Chriſtian prieſthood. 'One duty, lady Monteith, ſtill remains,
'which you muſt diſcharge. Cheerfully ſub-
'mit to your preſent calamities till Heaven ſees
'fit to liberate you from them.'

'I do,' ſaid Geraldine, meekly bending her head. 'I feel them to be the conſequences of
'crimes. Betrayed by a vain confidence in my
'own ſtrength, I ſhut my eyes againſt the
'cleareſt diſcoveries, and rejected the warning
'voice of Heaven, which ſpake in the language
'of a faithful friend. I not only ſubmit to live,
'I even cling to life, to that hopeleſs life, which
'has no other aim but by recollection and pati-
'ence to atone for my youthful follies, and to
ſmooth with meek reſignation the painful couch of death.'

'Remiſſion of ſins,' replied Mr. Evans, wiping away a ſtarting tear, 'is ever promiſed
'to ſincere contrition. Examine your heart,
'my dear lady! ſeparate the regret of paſt plea-
'ſures from the ſorrow for paſt offences. Try,
'by a ſevere ſcrutiny, how far the loſs of fame
'may claim the tear which ſtarts at the idea of
'remembered eminence; and, while the neceſ-
'ſity of forgiveneſs ſinks deep into your ſoul,
compoſe your anxieties by reflecting on the mercy of your God.'

Mrs.

Mrs. Powerſcourt looked as if her father had ſpoken with undue ſeverity; but the counteſs, after a mental ejaculation expreſſive of piety and reſignation, proceeded: 'While I frequented the circles of faſhionable life, I partook of their follies; yet the glare of perpetual amuſement, and the hurry of conſtant engagement, did not ſo far vitiate my mind as to render me unfit for the duties of domeſtic life. Reflection ever attended my pillow, and deſcribed, not the parties in which I was to appear, nor the adulation I ſhould receive, but the more grateful images of my children, my ſocial friends, my quiet occupations. Theſe, therefore, were ever my deareſt delights; and regret for theſe bleſſings will mingle with the tear that contrition claims.

'The love of fame was, I own, my predominant error. Impelled by this powerful paſſion, I purſued diſtinction, and, though I only ſought it by praiſe-worthy means, I am now ſenſible, that this 'buſy paſſion' mingled imperfection with my 'faireſt aims,' 'perplexed the genuine ſchemes of defective virtue,' and 'ſlyly warped my unſuſpecting heart.' Though in the ſight of man they may wear the ſame impoſing aſpect, the ſearcher of hidden things muſt diſcover an infinite difference between thoſe actions which originate from the dutiful deſire of pleaſing him, and thoſe the ultimate view of which was the applauſe of fellow-mortals. Your firmer mind, my Lucy, early imbibed the noble ambition of gaining the approbation of the Supreme Good. Your virtues ſhunned obſervation, and only courted the ſilent plaudit of conſcience. For me, though not inſenſible to the innate lovelineſs

'of

'of virtue, nor callous to the feelings of com-
'paſſion, I felt every faculty rouſed to exertion
'by the idea of what the world would ſay of
'me. Our hiſtory is a comment upon the com-
'parative tendency of theſe governing principles.
'Happy Powerſcourt! how firm muſt be your
'confidence in the integrity of a mind which
'always acts under the conviction that its moſt
'ſecret thoughts are noted by Omnipotence!'

'The merit was more in my ſituation, than
'in myſelf,' returned the amiable bride. 'I
'was ſecluded from temptation, and I had lei-
'ſure to acquaint myſelf with my own frailties.
'Retirement, my Geraldine! is the ſoil moſt
'congenial to female virtue. How will yours,
'which even in the contaminating world ap-
'peared ſo lovely, flouriſh in theſe peaceful
'ſhades! What ample ſupplies will your here-
'ditary poſſeſſions afford to your benevolence!
'Let not mortal ſorrow dry up the ſource
'which would convey happineſs to all around
'you; but enjoy the anticipated pleaſure of
'widely-diffuſed liberality.'

'You forget,' ſaid Geraldine, 'what I now
'am. The mercy of the law, or the bounty of
'lord Monteith, muſt determine the means of
'my future ſubſiſtence. My marriage-articles
'made no proviſion for contingent crimes. My
'dear father did not think his child could be
'guilty of any, and his conviction of my frailty
'was attended by death. The mortal ſorrow,
'my Lucy, which has to lament ſo many de-
'privations, cannot ceaſe, at leaſt while me-
'mory holds her ſeat. Yet though Reaſon
'ſhrinks from the contemplation of my cala-
'mities, I muſt continue to requeſt, that her
'guiding ray may accompany me to the laſt
'moment

'moment of my frail exiſtence. My generous 'friends! I ſadden you with my ſorrows. I 'feel your kind ſympathy. Every day confirms 'the certain diminution of my ſtrength and 'health; nor can I conceal from your diſcern-'ment my conviction that I have not long to 'live. Your pious offices, Mr. Evans, are 'doubly welcome. If any unwarrantable ſen-'timent eſcape my lips, reprove me with the 'meek intrepidity of your function, and teach 'me yet further to explore the weakneſs of my 'own heart. Yet in one point let your can-'dour credit my ſolemn aſſertion. It is not 'from any remaining infatuation, but from a 'deep ſenſe of my ſeducer's atrocious crimes, 'that I not only, thus unſolicited, expreſs my 'forgiveneſs of my deſtroyer; but I alſo ear-'neſtly entreat, that Heaven would pardon his 'miſdeeds.'

'Let us leave him,' ſaid Mr. Evans, 'to the 'unknown mercies of his Maker. It is not for 'us finite mortals to decide; but as far as our 'views can extend, hope ſeems like preſump-'tion. Dreadful, my dear lady, is the ſituation 'of that ſinner who confides in the infidelity 'which deſtroys his laſt refuge; nor can your 'charitable prayers benefit him who diſdains 'the mercy you implore.'

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

——What we have we prize not to the worth
Whilſt we enjoy it; but being lack'd and loſt,
Why then we rack the value; then we find
The virtue that poſſeſſion would not ſhow us
Whilſt it was ours.

SHAKESPEARE.

SOON after the foregoing converſation, lady Monteith received a letter from her lord's ſolicitor, informing her, that his lordſhip's meditated vengeance againſt Mr. Fitzoſborne having been diſappointed, he had determined to purſue the legal means of redreſs which were in his power. He had, therefore, inſtituted two ſuits in the eccleſiaſtical and civil courts, which he intended to follow up by an application to the Houſe of Peers for a divorce. The learned barriſter wiſhed to know what ſteps the counteſs would take in her own defence, or if ſhe ſuſpected that the evidence would affect the legitimacy of her ſon.

Geraldine's anſwer was ſubmiſſive, yet not altogether departing from the dignity of her character. She had no defence to make. She acquieſced in the puniſhment which the laws of her country would inflict. She only hoped, that her confeſſion might prevent ſome of the horrors of a public inveſtigation. Her ladyſhip added, that ſhe would addreſs the earl himſelf on the ſubject of the birth of his ſon.

Even

Even in the laſt ſcenes of her exiſtence, the ruling paſſion of my Heroine's mind predominated. Though perſuaded that her deep deſpair could receive no addition; though her imagination had long anticipated the courſe of law which her lord would purſue, yet the certainty of a legal proceſs, and the apprehenſion of general infamy, antedated the criſis of her diſorder; and an excruciating pain in her ſide announced the formation of an abſceſs, the rupture of which muſt be mortal. Her ſufferings were extreme, but the faint ſlumber which pain brought on was broken by more intolerable reflections. 'Not a corner in the kingdom,' ſaid ſhe, 'but 'muſt now be acquainted with my fall. The 'village dame, who never heard of my cele-'brity, will ſhudder at my diſgrace, and warn 'her daughters to avoid my crimes.'

She now pondered upon the only means of vindicating her character, and ſhe queſtioned the ſolidity of thoſe arguments which had induced her to ſuppreſs the knowledge of every exculpatory circumſtance. She had heard that Fitzoſborne had fled from England; a public diſcloſure would therefore have a ſuſpicious appearance. But that very ſlight, inſuring in ſome degree the earl's perſonal ſafety, pointed out this to be the proper time for making an application to him in behalf of his ſon, and endeavouring ſomewhat to ſoften his reſentment.—Impreſſed with too deep a ſenſe of her awful ſituation, to deny the alienation of her affections previous to her flight; fearful of exaſperating him by ſaying any thing that might have an air of recrimination; and deterred from entering at large upon her unhappy ſtory, no leſs by her own weakneſs, than by a fear of urging him to

follow Fitzosborne, she determined to confine herself to what related to her unfortunate child, and trust the partial vindication of her own conduct to the integrity and discretion of Mr. Powerscourt, who kindly undertook to be the bearer of the following letter.

'To the Earl of Monteith.

'IT is only in such circumstances as those in 'which I write, that I could dare to intrude on 'lord Monteith. You will soon be released 'from your disgraced wife by an irreversible 'sentence; and I would entreat your mercy to 'stop your proceedings in the courts of law, 'and to spare my yet remaining sense of shame 'the horror of having my story bandied about 'in the public papers, exposed to indecent rail-'lery and mercileſs reproach. I am in the last 'stage of a rapid decline, fully sensible of my 'offences, and fearing to add to their number. 'I declare upon the word of an accountable 'being, who knows she has not long to live, that 'lord Loch Lomond is your son, and entitled to 'be the heir of your honours. Compare the time 'of our fatal journey to London with the evi-'dence which you may collect of his appearance 'at his birth, and your suspicions must be re-'moved. And I beseech your justice, do not 'wrong an innocent babe from resentment to 'his mother.

'I entreat your forgiveness; at least do not 'follow me with your curses. Reconciliation 'I do not expect. I will, if you require me, 'for the little time I have to live, forbear the 'use of your name and arms. I restore your 'family jewels, which I had left at Powers-

'court.

'court. On my knees I beg your mercy with 'my dying lips. I ſhall commend you and my 'children to Heaven. Once more to ſee *them* 'would be the greateſt comfort that I could 'enjoy. Perhaps, as I am paſt recovery, you 'will grant me that bleſſing.

'GERALDINE.'

Lord Monteith had been informed of the counteſs's departure from his caſtle, without at the ſame time hearing of thoſe particulars which would have allowed him to infer her innocence. The raſhneſs of his natural character precluded reflection in circumſtances leſs agitating than thoſe in which he was now placed. Nor can it be wondered at, that, inſtead of going home to receive more punctual intelligence, he immediately ſet off in purſuit of a faithleſs wife and a treacherous friend. He took the direct road for London, for the very reaſon which ſhould have decided him againſt it; namely, becauſe Fitzoſborne had ſtated that he ſhould purſue that route. Frantic with rage, and only meditating how to compel his adverſary to give him ſatisfaction for his wrongs, he had reached the confines of Yorkſhire, before repeated diſappointments of hearing any tidings of the fugitives taught him to reflect that they had certainly taken another courſe. It now occurred to him, that the family eſtate of the Fitzoſbornes lay in the northern extremity of Lancaſhire. It ſeemed probable that the neglected manorial houſe might be the choſen reſidence of the guilty pair. He travelled ſome miles weſtward with this perſuaſion, till an accident which diſabled his carriage from proceeding compelled him to ſtop at a ſmall

a ſmall inn ſome miles diſtant from the poſt-town. His impatience at hearing that the only vehicle which this obſcure place afforded was engaged, nearly aſſumed the form of frenzy; and the landlord, whoſe concern at the gentleman's being ſo paſſionate, was heightened by his apprehenſions that he never might have an earl call at his houſe again, determined to try if his oratorical powers could allay the ſtorm of words; and, ſince his honour could not proceed, perſuade him to remain contented till his own carriage could be repaired, or the poſt-chaiſe returned. With this view he endeavoured to engage his attention; and the Barber of Bagdad was not a better ſtory-teller in his own opinion. He began by lamenting how unlucky it was that the chaiſe ſhould have juſt drove away, not ten minutes before his honor arrived, with a gentleman, who came to his houſe with his wife the night before. The poor lady was one of the prettieſt creatures he had ever ſeen; but ſhe ſeemed to be very ill, and was either always crying or ſitting in a brown ſtudy. The footman who was left to take care of her whilſt his maſter went to make a viſit a little way off, ſaid that ſhe was off her head.——A ſudden thought ſhot acroſs Monteith's mind. 'Where 'is ſhe!'—'In that room.'—He would inſtantly ſee her. Words were vain; and the feeble reſiſtance which the landlord made to prevent him from ruſhing into the apartment was foiled by a force to which paſſion gave Herculean vigour. Monteith broke from his opponent, and beheld his counteſs.

The preſence of the wretched Geraldine could no longer ſooth the ſtormy paſſions of her lord. On the contrary, it now irritated him to the

the moſt ungoverned frenzy. He ſaw ſhe was in diſtreſs; but could the moſt atrocious guilt aſſume compoſure on ſuch an occaſion? She attempted ſomething like a vindication of her conduct. But what extenuation could her crimes admit? They were as apparent as his own diſgrace. Did ſhe not deny any knowledge of the adulterer, when ſhe was recent from his arms? Why aſk to ſee the children ſhe had deſerted, wilfully deſerted? Her ſeeming agony excited contempt, her entreaties inſult; and as ſhe flung herſelf at his feet, he ſpurned her from him with abhorrence. Uttering a volley of imprecations againſt her deluſive beauty, he left her lifeleſs upon the floor, and ruſhed after Fitzoſborne, whoſe life appeared to be too poor a ſacrifice for his mighty revenge.

The effuſion of blood which attended her fall ſomewhat relieved lady Monteith's recollection from the effects of thoſe infernal potions which her ſeducer had adminiſtered; and her real ſtory being now known, ſhe was readily aſſiſted in her earneſt deſire of proceeding to Caernarvonſhire. Pomade, who had been placed as a guard over her during his maſter's abſence, abandoned his charge, dreading to encounter the athletic arm whih had felled the landlord to the ground; and he flew after Fitzoſborne to appriſe him of lord Monteith's arrival. The abſence of the ſeducer proceeded from two motives: he ſuppoſed that he left his victim in perfect ſecurity; and he was deſirous of inducing his ſiſter, who reſided in that neighbourhood, and was poſſeſſed of what the world calls a paſſable character, to receive the unfortunate counteſs, till, as he termed it, the affair was ſettled. He was, beſide, anxious to procure

ſome

ſome medical aid; the effects of his nefarious arts were much to be dreaded, and returning reaſon was to him equally alarming. Pomade's intelligence transferred his ſolicitude to the care of his own life, which he determined to preſerve by any means not *oſtenſibly* inconſiſtent with received opinions of intrepidity and honour. A chain of artifices preſerved him from the meditated deſtruction; and after a vain purſuit, Monteith arrived in London.

Lady Arabella immediately haſtened to him; but not with the pious deſign of ſoothing his anguiſh, nor of pleading in behalf of an unhappy woman. She was not of a temper to palliate a fault to which ſhe herſelf had never been tempted; and Geraldine had too ſtrongly awakened her jealouſy and envy to allow her to ſuppoſe that her criminality admitted of any extenuation. By her malicious comments the account which his lordſhip had received from his ſervants in Scotland tended rather to exaſperate than to ameliorate his rage; and becauſe their letters did not criminate their miſtreſs, he accuſed them of being participators in her crime.

Diſappointed, by Fitzoſborne's leaving the kingdom, in his intentions of either calling him out to combat, or of confining him in priſon by the preſſure of legal damages, the earl's fury pointed at the counteſs with an aſperity which increaſed with every real or fancied inſult to which her tarniſhed honour had expoſed him; and he purſued the preſcribed means of 'caſting her off a prey to fortune,' with an avidity and acrimony proportioned to the violence with which he had once loved her and confided in her virtue. He had ſent for his children to London, from the idea, that ſhe might have the effrontery

frontery to visit them at Monteith; and his own active suspicions, aided by Arabella's malignity, soon taught him to believe, that his unfortunate little son was the offspring of guilt. His memory continually tortured him with instances of Fitzosborne's attention to the infant, whose ill health, during its first month of existence, had rendered it a yet more tender object of Geraldine's maternal care; and the persuasion that a spurious issue would inherit his lineal honours, formed the climax of his misery. The dying countess, worn by mental and corporal anguish, was perhaps less an object of pity. Inebriety was his wretched resource; but even inebriety was ineffectual. His burning passions kindled with the feverish draught; and his servants, who once idolized their frank generous master, now trembled for their own safety whenever they approached him.

In this state of mind he was encountered by Mr. Powerscourt, the benevolent advocate of his unhappy wife. The proffered letter was rejected with disdain. The jewels were dashed upon the floor. Every request was answered by a sullen negative, and the representation of her sufferings was treated as a false pretence, invented to excite compassion. The cruel Arabella, who listened to the narrative of her present situation with more attention than her impassioned brother could command, coldly observed, that she really thought dying was the best thing which the poor imprudent lady could now do. Disappointed in his hopes, and even refused the sight of the children, lest he should revive the remembrance of a mother whom lady Arabella said they must forget, Mr. Powerscourt took leave with feelings of the deepest indignation against

againſt the unjuſt, inhuman, ſelf-approving cruelty, which denied forgiveneſs to one leſs criminal than themſelves, and withheld from a dying penitent the only conſolation which could relieve her mortal agonies.

On returning to his hotel, his attention was arreſted by an accquaintance, who ſolicited him to contribute to the relief of a poor fellow who had known better days. He had formerly been his ſervant, but was now out of place; and the ſudden departure of his laſt maſter from England had deprived him of a recommendatory character. Henry turned to look at the object of this exordium, and inſtantly recognized one of Fitzoſborne's attendants. The confuſion with which Pomade appeared to be overwhelmed was too extraordinary to eſcape his fixed obſervation. I ſhall not particulariſe what the reader's penetration will eaſily anticipate. The precipitation with which Fitzoſborne had fled from England, joined to his natural ingratitude, and the embarraſſment of his circumſtances, had prevented him from rewarding the agent who had principally aſſiſted his diabolical deſigns on lady Monteith. The preſſure of poverty, and an accidental rencontre, induced the ſubaltern villain to diſcover what he knew of that iniquitous tranſaction, in hopes of obtaining temporary ſupport. Lord Monteith was ſoon acquainted with every particular which ſpecified the accumulated guilt of the perfidious wretch who, under the fair guiſe of friendſhip, had completed the deſtruction of a happy family.

The obſervations by which Mr. Powerſcourt intended to have inforced this unequivocal teſtimony were now precluded by the vehemence of Lord Monteith's ſelf-accuſation. His once adored

adored wife was proved to be innocent in that inſtance which had appeared to fix upon her the charge of deliberate perfidy. The final views of Fitzoſborne could only be obtained by baſe falſehood and almoſt murderous fraud. Her delicate ſenſe of honour, ſhrinking with horror from the imputation of crimes, of which ſhe had rather been the victim than the participator, overpowered her feeble frame; and the wronged innocent (for ſo the quick tranſition of lord Monteith's paſſions induced him now to think her) muſt with her life atone for a huſband's credulous confidence and a traitor's temerity. She was now dearer than ever to his heart; and lady Arabella, convinced that there was no reſiſting a torrent, endeavoured to obliterate the remembrance of paſt ſarcaſms by her lively commiſeration for the ſweet ſufferer. Lord Monteith aſked for the rejected letter; bathed every ſentence with tears; called for the little outcaſt, whom he had renounced and baniſhed from his ſight; and recollected with horror, that he had ſent it to a diſtant county till the law ſhould relieve him from the ſuppoſititious incumbrance. His daughters were now alternately folded in his arms. Their likeneſs to their mother was recogniſed with heart-rending anguiſh. In fine, the carriages were immediately ordered for Caernarvonſhire; and the tedious journey was ſomewhat beguiled by the hope, that a reconciliation to her lord, and the preſence of her children, might ſtop the progreſs of decay. The ſilence of Henry was intended to ſuppreſs that vain expectation, and to prepare the unhappy huſband for the ſcenes which awaited him.

Compaſſion

Compaſſion for the children, who ſuffered much from the fatigue of rapid travelling, induced Mr. Powerſcourt to ſtop two ſtages ſhort of their intended deſtination; and he was urging lord Monteith to try to obtain a few hours repoſe, when an expreſs arrived from the manor-houſe to announce the increaſed danger of the counteſs, and to expedite his return. Freſh horſes were immediately ordered, and the travellers ſet off with a rapidity which even the ſpeed of the earl's former journey could not equal. His tortured memory continually recalled the occurrences of that journey, and his heart ſeemed ſomewhat eaſed of the pangs of ſelf-reproach by the invectives with which he loaded the arch-hypocrite, who then acted the part of friendſhip, that he might be enabled with his ſcorpion fangs to transfix his breaſt with impunity. A ray of hope would ſometimes break in. Geraldine had recovered from one dangerous attack; why not again? Henry had indeed affirmed, that the vital organs were irreparably injured; but it was preſumptuous to affirm what human ſkill could not aſcertain.—She might live, and they might yet be happy. Raſh, misjudging Monteith! when happineſs was not only in thy power, but abſolutely in thy poſſeſſion,—the *common* bleſſing ſeemed unworthy preſervation. All thy ſolicitude, all the anguiſh that corrodes thy ſoul, cannot now reſtore the ſlighted good. Could the healing art acquire miraculous energy ſufficient to renew in the lamented ſufferer the lovelineſs and the ſprightly health which once captivated thy ſoul,

Not

'Not poppy, nor mandragora,
'Nor all the drowſy ſyrups in the world,
'Can ever medicine to a mind diſeaſed.
——'O now for ever
'Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content.'

The path of reconciliation is impeded by inſurmountable barriers; and reflection would ſoon convince even the uxorious huſband, that wounded honour impoſed the neceſſity of ſeparation.

The morning broke before the travellers entered the gate of Powerſcourt. The earl's attention was arreſted by the atchievement ſuſpended under the architrave, and a ſigh burſt from his heart, extorted by the remembrance of the meek benevolence which it was deſigned to commemorate. Lights appeared at ſeveral of the windows. He could diſcern the ſervants gliding about when the carriage ſtopped; yet all was ſilent, except the whiſpering breeze. The hoſpitable doors, which uſed to fly open at his approach, were now cautiouſly uncloſed. The attendants, whom the noiſe of the carriages had gathered in the hall, were dreſſed in the weeds of woe, and their countenances were as mournful as their garb.

To the quick interrogatory of, 'Is ſhe alive?' a faint affirmative was the only reply; and Monteith, gaſping for breath, was ruſhing forward, when the venerable figure of Mr. Evans arreſted his ſteps. 'I am ſummoned,' ſaid the good man, waving his hand. 'Let 'me perform my awful duty, and then you 'ſhall be admitted. The counteſs has ſent to 'requeſt my prayers. Join, ſir, and recom-
'mend

'mend her parting ſpirit to the Father of mercies.'

'Pray for us both,' raved Monteith; 'and 'if there be efficacy in prayer, entreat that 'my burning brain may be numbed by inſenſibility. If you have any mercy,' continued he, raiſing his voice after Mr. Evans, who had made a ſign to the ſervants to detain him, 'let 'me ſee my wedded love. Do not you know, that 'it is my ſeverity which has broken her heart, 'and my forgiveneſs will yet reſtore her? 'Think you that I can be patient when one 'loſt moment may plunge me into perpetual 'anguiſh?' Mr. Evans promiſed that he would immediately announce his arrival; and he leaned againſt one of the pillars, panting with ſuſpence, expecting his fearful ſummons.

It was to the death-bed of withering youth and faded beauty, to the couch on which greatneſs, diſrobed of its diſtinguiſhing ornaments, confeſſed its deſcent from the common ſtock of humanity, that Mr. Evans approached. "Is 'it my extreme weakneſs, or ſuperior intelli-'gence," ſaid the counteſs in a hollow voice, 'that makes me now attribute ſuch powerful 'efficacy to a good man's prayers?'

'A fellow ſinner,' replied Mr. Evans, 're-'commends you to Heaven.'

'Your hand, ſir! I ſhall not long be able 'to thank you.—My ſituation is very awful.—'How my poor heart throbs with pain and 'terror!—Any news from lord Monteith?'

'He forgives you.'

'And are my children well?'

'They are waiting to be admitted.'

'I fear

'I fear my ſight is now too dim to ſee them. 'But I would bleſs them, if I dare.—Would 'it be preſumptuous in me to bleſs them?'

A loud groan at this inſtant iſſued from the door. It was Monteith's voice, and the dying counteſs caught the well-known ſound. The bed ſhook with her convulſive tremblings. 'I 'thought,' ſaid ſhe, 'that nothing mortal 'would have affected me. But that voice— 'oh that I could proſtrate myſelf before him.'

'My wife!' exclaimed the earl, who had by this time broke from thoſe who attempted to reſtrain him, and approached the bed; when, ſhocked by the emaciated face where beauty once reſided, he ſhuddering drew back his extended arms. 'Infernal villain, who hath 'brought thee to this! Curſed traitor! who 'firſt ſeduced me from thee;—plunged me in 'vice, then ſtole my treaſure; and now laughs 'at my miſery!—may his guilty ſoul for 'ever writhe in tortures ſuch as I now endure! 'Awake, awake, my love! my Geraldine!' '(for, over-powered by his appearance, ſhe 'had fainted.)—'I forgive thee. Oh live, 'my love! but I know all thy ſad ſtory. Do 'live, do but ſmile upon me. Once more 'bleſs me with thy tender ſmile. Nothing, 'nothing then ſhall part us.' The earl conti- 'nued raving till he was forced out of the 'apartment.'

The laſt moments of lady Monteith's life were marked by humble confidence and dignified compoſure. She called for her daughters, folded them in her arms, and then placed them in her Lucy's. 'Be you,' ſaid ſhe, 'their 'future mother, and transfer to them that 'love I once enjoyed. Waſte not your preci-

'ous

'ous tears upon my unconſcious corpſe. My 'exiſtence is multiplied in theſe helpleſs 'orphans; and they ſhall flouriſh under the 'care of the ſiſter of my ſoul. Infinite mercy 'may perhaps permit my ſeparated ſpirit to 'witneſs your pious performance of this in-'truſted charge.'

She again caught lady Arabella to her boſom. 'My eldeſt darling,' ſaid ſhe, 'you will not 'forget me. Give your aunt this ring, the 'pledge of reconciliation and peace. Keep 'this miniature till James can underſtand that 'it is his mother's likeneſs. Ye guardian 'angels, watch over theſe innocents!—All 'gracious Parent of the friendleſs, in mercy 'protect my babes from my faults and my 'ſorrows!'

'Watch,' ſaid ſhe, addreſſing Henry Pow-erſcourt, 'my unhappy lord. Do not abandon 'him to his firſt ſorrows. Time will ſoften 'his deſpair. Tell him that his repentant wife 'bleſſes his goodneſs, and dies in hopes of 'meeting him in a better world. I would 'have told him ſo; but the ſight of him 'awakes inſupportable anguiſh. Urge him to 'comply with my laſt requeſt, and receive my 'children into your hoſpitable dwelling. And 'you, my Chriſtian monitor! (looking at Mr. 'Evans), early inſtill into their minds thoſe 'principles which repel temptation and ſupport 'diſtreſs. O that lord Monteith would ſeek 'conſolation at the healing fountain of ſalva-'tion!'

Her once-radiant eyes gradually aſſumed a glaſſy dimneſs, yet, though no longer able to diſtinguiſh objects, they continued fixed on that part of the room where her children ſtood.

Her

Her clammy hands graſped Mr. Powerſcourt's with convulſive eagerneſs, and the laſt ſounds that quivered on her lips were ſupplications for mercy.

So terminated the ſhort exiſtence of the lovely and amiable Geraldine, to whom nature, art, and fortune ſeemed prodigal of their favours; the faithful friend, the dutiful daughter, the obſervant wife, the tender mother. One fatal weakneſs, combining with the arts of a baſe ſeducer, annihilates all this excellence, blaſts the fair promiſe of many happy years, and drives her to the refuge of a premature grave.

Does no ſolemn truth ſpeak from her early bier? Does no warning voice repel the flutter of the heart which throbs for adulation, or arreſt the career of thoſe who, madly purſuing fame or pleaſure, expoſe domeſtic happineſs, the only 'bliſs of paradiſe which has ſurvived 'the fall,' to the caſual attacks of ignorance, the ſubtle malignity of ſyſtematic depravity, and the certain ruin of indifference and neglect? In vain does perverſe human nature create fictitious bleſſings, and waſte its reſtleſs hours in the purſuit of viſionary delights, diſdaining the pure and peaceful comforts which God and nature allow to all, a guiltleſs conſcience, ſocial enjoyment, ſelf-poſſeſſion and content.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

Vain man! 'tis Heaven's prerogative
To take, what firſt it deign'd to give,
Thy tributary breath:
In awful expectation plac'd,
Await thy doom, nor impious haſte
To pluck from God's right hand his inſtruments of death.

WARTON.

MRS. POWERSCOURT, whoſe reſtrained ſorrow had forborne to interrupt the parting ſoul, ſunk upon the lifeleſs corpſe of her friend, and preſſed the yet-warm lips with a fervid kiſs. Then receiving the terrified children into her arms, 'Ever dear and ſacred truſt,' ſhe exclaimed, 'living images of your angel mother: 'dear loſt companion! pleaſing friend! faithful partaker of all my youthful joys!—By all 'the anguiſh of this excruciating ſeparation,—'by all the endearing remembrances which my 'impaſſioned memory ſhall ever preſerve,—by 'all my hopes of meeting thy approving ſpirit 'in a happier world, I will diſcharge my truſt 'to theſe ſweet innocents, and for their ſakes 'ſubdue the keen regret which would make life 'appear a barren deſert, bereft of thy endearing lovelineſs.'

To the raving deſperation of lord Monteith no pen can do juſtice. Unuſed to calamity, and indignant of ſelf-reproach, his ſtubborn heart refuſed

refuſed to ſubmit to the righteous but ſevere puniſhment; and his galled conſcience ſtarted from the terrifying accuſation, that he, 'like 'the baſe Judean, had flung a pearl away richer 'than all his tribe.'

He ſought to ſilence the horrors of remorſe by the moſt extravagant affection to his lady's memory. Her funeral was conducted in the higheſt ſtyle of pageant decoration; and he wearied himſelf with examining deſigns for a monument which he propoſed to have executed in Parian marble, and that its magnificence ſhould rival the proudeſt ſtructures which ſorrow, taſte, or vanity have erected over 'fallen 'mortality.' He teazed his children with his frantic careſſes; vowed that he only exiſted for their ſakes; determined never to be ſeparated from them; and traced, with mingled ecſtacy and anguiſh, the various reſemblances which they bore to their mother.

'My little Geraldine,' he would ſay, 'is 'her perfect image. Juſt ſuch a ſmile as that 'of my beloved, before I knew that accurſed 'Fitzoſborne. Lucy has her beautiful hair, 'and Arabella her melodious voice. Poor 'James too—but I have never ſeen him ſince 'he was three months old. They will all for-'get her, except Arabella. Yet the murderer 'ſtill lives.—But may I periſh, Fitzoſborne, if 'I do not purſue thee to the remoteſt corners 'of the globe.'

While the heart glows with ſentiments of juſt indignation, it is natural to inquire the fate of the author of theſe calamitous ſcenes. The laſt hours of Fitzoſborne's life were not ſufficiently ſplendid to allure inexperience to deſert the plain path of rectitude, from the

hope of acquiring fame or fortune by indirect means. He had indeed plucked the forbidden fruit, but he had found it, like the bitter apples of Sodom, diſtaſteful and deluſive, the origin of miſery and regret.

Diſdainfully rejected by the victim of his artifices; compelled to fly his native country, or to languiſh in hopeleſs captivity; abandoned even by the licentious part of the world, who, though they enthuſiaſtically applaud triumphant vice, are ever firſt to ſhun indigent guilt; Fitzoſborne was now left to meditate on the abuſe of diſtinguiſhed talents, the waſte of perverted induſtry, and the folly, as well as the wickedneſs, of that knowledge which only aſpires to organiſe depravity.

Theſe inſupportable reflections were, however, ſoon interrupted; and his miſerable exiſtence brought to a period by other means than the ſword of an injured huſband and betrayed friend. Retributive juſtice not only willed his fall in that country where he had imbibed his peſtilent notions; it alſo decreed, that thoſe very opinions ſhould be the immediate occaſion of his death. It is well known, that the mercileſs tyranny which Robeſpierre erected on the tomb of the murdered Louis ſpared neither friends nor enemies. Fitzoſborne, as an Engliſhman and a gentleman, became an object of ſuſpicion. In vain did he plead that he had diſgraced his anceſtors, and abjured his country; in vain boaſt his contempt of ſuperſtition and abhorrence of preſcribed forms; in vain bend with mock adoration at the idol ſhrine of liberty, or with ſervile adulation load the new Romans with the falſified epithets of magnanimous and illuſtrious: they,

who

who ſpared not a Roland or a Condorcet, could not be expected to regard ſanguinary *principles*, unleſs atteſted by the repeated perpetration of ſanguinary *deeds*.

In the gloom of the Abbaye priſon, expoſed to all the various wretchedneſs of want, diſturbed by the groans of fellow-ſufferers, and ſurrounded by the inſtruments of deſpotiſm, the wretched Fitzoſborne might have ſeen the refutation of that falſe philoſophy which, founded upon the viſionary perfectibility of the human ſpecies, rejects the wiſe reſtrictions which Infinite Wiſdom has contrived as a barrier againſt the extreme atrocity of a fallible creature. But Fitzoſborne could neither commune with his own heart, nor ſeek forgiveneſs at that throne of mercy which he had often preſumptuouſly blaſphemed. Amongſt the effects of theſe alarming doctrines, it is not the leaſt lamentable that they ſteel the heart againſt contrition. The unhappy ſinner, whom paſſion betrays into guilt, trembles at the recollection of thoſe crimes which the ſyſtematic villain juſtifies. But the ſorrows of penitence lead to hope, while the pangs of impiety end in deſpair.

Shrinking with horror from the diſgrace of a public execution, Fitzoſborne applied to the unbeliever's laſt reſource, and with his own hand anticipated the ſtroke of the guillotine. He died amongſt men brutalized by guilt, or petrified by ſuffering. He could not, therefore, expect the poor conſolation of pity; but his laſt moments were unexpectedly rendered more agonizing by the intelligence (which the keeper of the priſon communicated with all the unfeeling cruelty of his profeſſion) that the Dictator, having received a very favourable account of his talents, had not only determined to liberate him from priſon, but

alſo to advance him to ſome confidential employment. Shuddering at the idea of that eternal ſleep, the reality of which he yet wiſhed to believe; clinging to life with greater earneſtneſs, in proportion as the poſſibility of living diminiſhed; curſing his own impatience, which had irretrievably deſtroyed the fair proſpects which he might have realized: ſtung by remorſe and ſelf-accuſation, without one ray of hope; Fitzoſborne's terrible unlamented exit appeared to anticipate the horrors of futurity. But here let me drop the awful veil; and while juſtice refuſes the commiſerating tear, let human nature, conſcious of its own infirmities, humbly ſolicit the protection of Omnipotence againſt the magic of novelty, the deluſions of ſophiſtry, and the arrogance of human Reaſon, whenever, proud of her own ſupremacy, ſhe preſumes to paſs the interdicted bounds preſcribed to her finite powers.

The hiſtory of my remaining characters will be compriſed in a few pages. Mr. Powerſcourt prudently determined to let the firſt effervescence of lord Monteith's grief ſubſide before he requeſted to be intruſted with the care of thoſe children whoſe ſociety the unhappy father fancied would alleviate his affliction. But the cheek of infancy is not always dimpled with ſmiles. Its little foibles require calm correction; and though it is delightful 'to teach the young idea how to 'ſhoot,' its wild luxuriance muſt be tenderly repreſſed. Calamity did not increaſe the number of the earl's virtues, and patience and application were never wanted in the liſt. He therefore ſoon found the prattle of childhood too mild an opiate to lull the tortures of corroding reflection. Lady Arabella too, who, on hearing that ſkill in education was the very higheſt ton, had determined

to

to be governeſs to her ſweet little nieces herſelf, perceived that verbs and propoſitions were very dull reading, and that the engagements of the ſchool-room were abſolutely incompatible with mixing in the world. In leſs than three months after the death of their mother, the children were fixed at Powerſcourt to the mutual ſatisfaction of all parties.

Love is ſaid to be the only paſſion which can conquer death. But friendſhip, as belonging to the ſame family, claims the like honour. Long after the lamented death of Lady Monteith, the following ſonnet flowed from her Lucy's pen:

To FRIENDSHIP.

O Friendſhip! ſolacer of grief! whoſe ſmile
Can calm the terrors of life's ruthleſs ſtorms,
Come, with thy daughter's memory, and beguile
My penſive hours. Recall the fairy forms
Of early pleaſures. Bid them trip along
Gay as the ſanguine hope which youth inſpires.
Renew my Geraldine's enchanting ſong:
That ſong which warbles now 'mid angel choirs.

O be her peerleſs excellence diſplay'd,
True to the likeneſs in my boſom worn!
O'er weeping error caſt that lenient ſhade,
Which ſcreens repentance from opprobrious ſcorn.
Gild with thy lamp the cold ſepulchral gloom,
And twine thy roſes round the mouldering tomb.

But it was not to the expreſſions of vain regret or elegant ſuſceptibility that this amiable woman appealed for the atteſtation of her inviolable affection. Her exemplary diſcharge of the awful

truſt which ſhe had undertaken, unqueſtionably confirmed the ſincerity of her regard. The opening graces of the lovely children promiſe to reward her pious care, but who that recollects their mother's fate will dare to predict the event?

Though the neighbourhood round Powerſcourt-houſe will long retain an affectionate veneration for the memory of their late benefactor, yet they confeſs with gratitude, that the preſent repreſentative of that illuſtrious houſe is the true heir of the good ſir William's virtues. The exertions of an intelligent cultivated mind ſupply the deficiencies of a leſs ample fortune; and the deſires of Henry Powerſcourt to confer happineſs are only limited by his power of beſtowing it.

Though happy in his union with a woman, whoſe taſte and character is moſt happily adapted to his own, he has not entirely forgotten the attachment of his early years; and he views the adopted children of his once adored Geraldine with all the fondneſs of paternal affection. He traces with tender anxiety their reſemblance to their mother; and he ſympathiſes with poignant ſenſibility in all his Lucy's regrets and cares. Often as he wanders through the ſhades which derive a greater beauty from the intereſting remembrance of youthful pleaſures, he contemplates the perplexed maze of paſt events, and raiſes his eyes in grateful veneration of that Being who kept him ſtedfaſt in the path of duty, and ultimately led him to tranquillity and content.

Mr. Evans continues to enjoy a ſerene old age, dignified by the exalted virtues which are comprized in the general term of chriſtian philanthropy. He occaſionally viſits at the manor-houſe, and is gratified by the company of his children

and

and their young charge. But his time is generally ſpent at the rectory, meditating on the perplexities of the world he is about to leave, and the perpetuity of that to which he is journeying. His reſpectful gratitude to his late patron is exemplified by the care he takes to preſerve among his pariſhioners the remembrance of thoſe mild virtues conſpicuous in ſir William's character, which were ennobled by the ſong of angels, and are happily adapted to univerſal practice, 'Peace 'on earth and good-will toward men.'

Lord Monteith continues to drag a miſerable exiſtence. His intemperate habits have entirely obliterated all the graces of his perſon and the amiable qualities of his mind. He is now the aſſociate of boon companions, and the dupe of ſharpers; ſought only by ſervile ſycophants and uſurers, and avoided by all who preſerve any decent reſpect for character. His health rapidly declines. Prevented by legal reſtrictions from ultimately injuring his children's property, he has been driven by his thoughtleſs extravagance to the deſperate reſource of life annuities, which have been multiplied, till they ſo nearly reach the value of his rent-roll, that it is now become a favourite ſpeculation whether his life or his fortune will hold out the longeſt.

Repeated matrimonial diſappointments have given lady Arabella Macdonald ſomething of a cynical caſt of mind. Not that it appears in her conduct, for ſhe ſtill glitters in the firſt circles, and is always the beſt dreſſed and noiſieſt woman of faſhion in the room. But ſhe has been heard to expreſs ſeveral miſanthropic ſentiments; and her diſlike to the male part of the ſpecies has ariſen to ſuch a degree of acrimony, that ſhe affirms ſhe will never part with her liberty, 'which 'is the zeſt of life,' to oblige any of thoſe odious

mercenary

mercenary creatures. There are people who think that she will persevere in her resolution, not on account of her having lately become a *belle esprit* of the first class, but from the knowledge of some *private* events which have lately happened at the pharo table kept by the right honourable lady viscountess Fitzosborne, wife of a British *senator*, and lady Arabella's most *particular* friend.

The Author's intention of enforcing some moral truths by an appropriate narrative is now complete. Whatever disregard of applause she may affect in her assumed character, or whatever indifference she may really feel for the fiat of the self-constituted guardians of literature, if they should pervert their important and highly responsible office, by exerting the influence which learning and wit give them over the public taste in recommending works injurious to public morals, she still recollects, that sound sense, accurate discrimination, and correct judgment, form a part of that public by which her merit must be tried; and she cannot but feel anxious, that the rectitude of her *intention* should be admitted by such a tribunal.

If her apprehension of the dangerous tendency of some popular productions should be deemed ill-founded, the *real* friends of morality and religion will still say, "God speed!" to the enthusiastic champion who sallies forth to resist even the delving mole that exerts its puny powers to undermine the sacred edifice. Nor will her acrimonious censure of those false lights which lead the unwary astray, induce the reflecting reader to suspect that she is hostile to the cause of real candour, true philosophy, and judicious liberality. In common with every well-wisher to the happiness and improvement of the world, she deeply

mourns

mourns the irreparable injuries which they have received from the blaſphemous pretenſions of thoſe hypocritical furies who have uſurped their hallowed characters.

She feels it neceſſary to add an apology to the lovers of propriety and decorum, for her frequent alluſions to religious ſubjects, and her intermixture of ſerious truths with fictitious events. It is not from any vain deſire of throwing her feeble gage in the crowded fields of controverſy, much leſs from a want of heart-felt reverence for ſacred themes, that ſhe adventured to make theſe digreſſions; but as the moſt faſhionable, and perhaps moſt ſucceſsful, way of vending pernicious ſentiments has been through the medium of books of entertainment, ſhe conceives it not only allowable, but neceſſary, to repel the enemy's inſidious attacks with ſimilar weapons.

One of the misfortunes under which literature now labours is, that the title of a work no longer announces its intention: books of travels are converted into vehicles of politics and ſyſtems of legiſlation. Female letter-writers teach us the arcana of government, and obliquely vindicate, or even recommend, manners and actions at which female delicacy ſhould bluſh, and female tenderneſs mourn. Traits on education ſubvert every principle of filial reverence: Writers on morality lay the axe to the root of domeſtic harmony: Compilers of natural hiſtory debaſe their pages with deſcriptions which modeſty cannot peruſe: Philologiſts diſpute the revealed will of God: Philoſophers and antiquarians deny its hiſtorical credibility: and Mathematicians define the nonentity of Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being. The muſe chaunts the yell of diſcord, and, under the pretence of univerſal citizenſhip

tizenſhip, ſounds the dirge of that *amor patriæ* which her claſſic predeceſſor ſought to inſpire. And laſt, though not leaſt in its effect, the novel, calculated, by its inſinuating narrative and intereſting deſcription to faſcinate the imagination without rouſing the ſtronger energies of the mind, is converted into an offenſive weapon, directed againſt our religion, our morals, or our government, as the humour of the writer may determine his particular warfare. The egotiſm of infidelity, which guides the wandering pen, may be the undeſigned cauſe of ſome of theſe effects; but *repeated* deviations from an oſtenſible ſubject can only proceed from a ſettled deſign of *covertly* attacking whatever ſcience once taught us to revere.

THE END.

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* * * *
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